

## 2025 King County Youth Action Plan

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November 2025



**King County**

## Acknowledgements

In 2023, the King County Children and Youth Advisory Board called upon King County to update the Youth Action Plan to reflect current data and experiences among young people and families. The Executive is grateful to the youth who led and participated in development of the Youth Bill of Rights, which informed the 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendations, and the youth-serving organizations and individuals who provided input on priority themes and recommendations.

Special thanks to the King County's Children and Youth Advisory Board for shepherding this process, and for providing continuous oversight of the Youth Action Plan's implementation in the coming years: Aaron Johnson, Angela Griffin, Angela Phan, Annu Luthra, Ariana Sherlock, Beth Larsen, Carol Goertzel, Charmaine Jones, Cindy Elizalde, Debbie Peterson, Donald Felder, Dwane Chappelle, Eden Gebre, Gracie McDanold, Hattie Steward, Helena Stephens, Jack Edgerton, Jackie Jainga Hyllseth, Jasmine Lee Fry, Jerry Blackburn, Jessica Werner, Kristina Mendieta, Lidiya Gebre, Lisa Stirgus, Meena Natajara, Merob Kebede, Nicole Herron, Rita Alcantara, Shawn Armour, Suzette Espinoza-Cruz, Yedidia Alebachew, and Yolanda Trout.

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## I. Executive Summary

In 2014, Ordinance 17738 was approved, calling for the development of a Youth Action Plan to set King County's priorities for serving infants through young adults.<sup>1, 2</sup> The 2015 Youth Action Plan was developed by a task force of 25 community leaders with input from youth and families, community members, experts in early childhood, youth development and education, and leaders across sectors. The 2015 Youth Action Plan was adopted by Motion 14378.<sup>3</sup>

In 2023, the King County Children and Youth Advisory Board (CYAB) called for the update the Youth Action Plan, to recognize investments that occurred in the county over the past eight years and continue reflecting the current realities of young people. Building from the original 2015 Youth Action Plan, the 2025 Youth Action Plan reflects ongoing advancements set forth in King County's Equity and Social Justice Plan (2016-2022), Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plans (2016-2021 and 2022-2027), the Implementation Plan for the Investment of Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account Proceeds (2020-2036), and the King County Youth Bill of Rights (2025).<sup>4, 5, 6, 7, 8</sup>

### Timeline and methodology for developing the 2025 Youth Action Plan

DCHS initiated the Youth Action Plan update process in mid-2023 and completed it in the second half of 2025. DCHS staff and a consultant managed the Youth Action Plan update team, comprised of managers and data scientists from across DCHS and Public Health.<sup>9</sup> The CYAB provided guidance, feedback, and approval of the final set of recommendations as noted below.<sup>10</sup> The timeline for completing the 2025 Youth Action Plan took place over six phases:

Phase 1: Review and synthesize Youth Action Plan progress since 2015 (September 2023 – January 2024)

Phase 2: Review emergent themes with community and ask, 'Did we get it right?' (January 2024 – May 2024)

Phase 3: Leverage County expertise to further inform recommendation areas (April 2024 – July 2024)

Phase 4: Update the Youth Action Plan section on how children and youth are faring in King County: (August 2024 – September 2024)

Phase 5: Synthesize input, draft recommendations, gather feedback (July 2024 – December 2024)

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinance 17738 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>2</sup> King County Youth Action Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ordinance 14378 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>4</sup> King County's Equity and Social Justice Plan (2016-2022) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>5</sup> Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan (2016-2022) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>6</sup> Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan (2022-2027) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>7</sup> Implementation Plan for the Investment of Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account Proceeds (2020 - 2036) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>8</sup> King County Youth Bill of Rights (2025) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>9</sup> The DCHS Youth Action Plan Policy and Program Manager worked closely with Moon Snail Consulting, under the guidance of the Director & Deputy Director of the Children, Youth, and Young Adults Division throughout the Youth Action Plan update process.

<sup>10</sup> See CYAB approved minutes for November 12, 2024 [\[LINK\]](#)

Phase 6: Finalize report writing (January 2025 – October 2025)

### Summary of how children and youth are faring in King County

The data provided in Appendix A on the well-being among young people in King County point to stability and modest improvement in some areas, though disparities in outcomes based on race, gender, housing status, and place persist. This includes adverse birth outcomes, King County's on-time high school graduation rate, the prevalence of exclusionary discipline, and the percentage of high school students feeling safe.<sup>11, 12, 13, 14</sup> The data also points to issues of ongoing concern or declining outcomes. This includes families experiencing challenges finding affordable, accessible child care, the prevalence of depression among high schoolers, student homelessness among young people under the age of 25, youth representation among shooting victims in gun violence, basic needs insecurity among college students, and high school graduates successfully transitioning to work or post-secondary education.<sup>15</sup>

### Youth Action Plan Principles

In 2014, the Youth Action Plan Task Force identified three fundamental principles that are embedded within each of the 2015 Youth Action Plan recommendations. The CYAB maintained and consolidated the 2015 principles into the 2025 Youth Action Plan principles 2 and 3 below and included a new principle on striving for optimal well-being, healing, and joy. This principle reflects the need for King County government to sustain aspirational goals for happiness and thriving lives for all young people, rather than limiting goals to prevention and addressing negative outcomes only. The three fundamental principles are:

1. Strive for optimal well-being, healing, and joy.
2. The well-being of children, youth, young adults, and families should not be predicted by their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, geography, income, and/or immigration status.
3. Child and youth policy development, services, and programming should intentionally include the people impacted by the policies and services in authentic and meaningful ways.

### Consistencies and changes between the 2015 to 2025 plans

The 2025 Youth Action Plan includes changes in the title language for recommendation areas 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7, reflecting progress and learnings since 2015. The 2015 Youth Action Plan recommendation area 9 was combined with area 7 in the 2025 plan to address redundancy and provide clarity given progress implementing the 2015 Youth Action Plan; and the 2025 plan introduces a new recommendation area 9 to reflect the important role of community-based organizations in delivering human services.

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<sup>11</sup> Washington State Vital Statistics (Births): Data dashboard. Navigate to "More from this Data Source," select "early and adequate prenatal care" from the dropdown on "choose another birth indicator." [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, K. and Ritter, G. (2017). Disparate Use of Exclusionary Discipline: Evidence on Inequities in School Discipline from a U.S. State [\[LINK\]](#); Start with Us: Unpacking Bias in School Discipline, The Road Map Project, 2017 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>14</sup> Data Dashboard - Healthy Youth Survey [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix A for references and elaboration of the details provided in this summary.

Overall, the 2025 recommendations are generally consistent with 2015 recommendations, particularly in terms of values, themes, populations, and urgency. This includes reiterating an overall commitment to eliminating institutional racism and other forms of bias, continuing promotion and prevention efforts, sustaining efforts to mitigate harm and bias in data interpretation and reporting, ensuring access to basic needs, and addressing urgent intervention needs such as behavioral health services and youth homelessness.

The 2025 Youth Action Plan introduced new recommendations, such as improving equitable and affordable access to child care and digital technology, ensuring workforce development as part of upstream efforts, establishing a King County Youth Commission, developing an integrated referral system and resource database network, and focusing on gun violence prevention and community-based alternatives to secure youth detention.

## **2025 Youth Action Plan Recommendations**

To advance King County's efforts to ensure that all young people in King County can reach adulthood happy, healthy, safe and thriving, the CYAB recommends that King County:

### **1. Lead with Equity, Racial and Social Justice**

- A. Identify, prevent, and eliminate institutional racism and other forms of bias within County government divisions and departments providing supports to children, youth, and families, including contracting processes.
- B. Ensure young people and others with limited access to decision makers are engaged as partners in determining the services and activities meant to serve them.
- C. Ensure opportunities for youth to grow up happy, healthy, safe, and thriving are linguistically and culturally appropriate, accessible, and meet the needs of diverse communities throughout King County.
- D. Build a strategy of belonging within King County government and with partners to combat social isolation and ensure inclusion of young people and the adults who support them.
- E. Partner with appropriate organizations to encourage voting.

### **2. Strengthen and Stabilize Families, Children, Youth, and Young Adults**

#### **2.1 Meet the Basic Needs of Children, Youth, and Families**

- A. Ensure access to fresh or shelf stable, nutritious, culturally relevant, and affordable food from birth and beyond.
- B. Meet the health and safety needs of infants, toddlers, and youth by ensuring seasonally and age-appropriate clothing and hygiene for sleep, home, and school.
- C. Ensure housing stability and access to safe shelter for youth and young adults and reduce the disproportionate number of LGBTQIA+ youth and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) youth who experience homelessness or housing instability.
- D. Ensure livable wage youth and young adult employment initiatives with benefits, including second chance employment opportunities for young people who have been criminal-legal system involved.

- E. Ensure digital equity and access to current technology (Wi-Fi, software, and hardware) necessary for navigating life, school, and work.
- F. Ensure safe and accessible transportation options including walkability, public transportation access, and other alternatives in transportation deserts.

## 2.2 Ensure the Well-being of Pregnant and Parenting Persons and Primary Caregivers

- A. Ensure access to anti-racist pre-conception care, family planning, and health education.
- B. Address racism, discrimination, bias, and stigma in perinatal care (during pregnancy, and the months following birth) in partnership with community.
- C. Expand equitable and high-quality health care by improving care integration, expanding telehealth services, and increasing reimbursement.
- D. Increase access to mental health and substance use disorder prevention, screening, and treatment for pregnant and parenting people. Also see recommendations 2.5 Behavioral Health

## 2.3 Improve Equity, Access, and Affordability of Child Care

- A. Build alignment and commitment across government jurisdictions to support an equitable, accessible, and thriving child care system.
- B. Transform and improve subsidy and funding models for child care providers, including wages and capital projects.
- C. Partner with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families to ensure licensing and regulations are just, resourced, and responsive to families and providers.
- D. Ensure children with diverse developmental and behavioral needs are supported through inclusion-driven programs in the classroom and in school.
- E. Serve as a role model and advocate for caregiver friendly workplaces.

## 2.4 Improve Access to Expanded Learning and Youth Development for School-Aged Children, Youth, and Young Adults

- A. Ensure continued funding for high quality, culturally responsive programming for school-aged youth from five to 24 during, before, and after school hours.
- B. Strengthen partnerships between schools, school districts and expanded learning providers.
- C. Ensure access to high quality summer learning and experiential activities.

## 2.5 Expand Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Use) Supports and Services

- A. Expand definition and delivery of Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder (Behavioral Health) supports.
- B. Co-create and embed behavioral health support in youth development programs, schools, and community-centered organizations.
- C. Foster youth empowerment and leadership in behavioral health and create “by and for” opportunities for BIPOC & LGBTQIA+ Youth.
- D. Ensure a range of treatment options for mental health and substance use disorders are available.
- E. Develop and support places and services for recovery, healing, and reentry.

## 2.6 Increase opportunities to engage whole families in youth programming

- A. Increase opportunities for intergenerational resource sharing, learning, and community building.

- B. Provide culturally responsive workshops, trainings, and services to families to navigate systems and access supports.

## 2.7 Prioritize services for those most in need

### **3. Stop the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

- A. Improve partnerships with schools and school districts to implement alternative disciplines like restorative justice practices within schools and minimize referrals and contact with the criminal legal system.
- B. Prioritize and increase funding for gun violence prevention and community-led safety.
- C. Explore and expand community-based alternatives to secure youth detention.
- D. Provide distinct services to young adults ages 18 to 24 in the County's adult criminal legal system.
- E. Invest in workforce development and paid training opportunities for legal system-involved or vulnerable youth.

### **4. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration and Collective Impact**

- A. Invest in strengthening existing and emerging local cross-sector collaboratives, conveners, and collective impact leaders to build capacity for regional efforts towards systems change.
- B. Build clear mechanisms and strategies, such as braided funding and aligned data, to collaborate and coordinate within and across King County departments, and with local cities and Washington State departments serving children, youth, and families.
- C. Engage with philanthropy, and other private sector partners, to ensure the wealth of our region supports eliminating inequities and promotes thriving communities for children, youth, and families.
- D. Support an integrated referral system and resource database across the network of community service providers to have one place where young people, and those that support them, can learn about, and get connected to programming.

### **5. Be Data Informed and Data Inclusive**

- A. Center and reflect communities in data, including youth and family voice, prioritizing community-based partnerships, and relationships with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and organizations.
- B. Dedicate the resources needed to continue building capacity within the County and in communities and organizations to collect, use, and improve data practices.
- C. Build and sustain a culture of learning and accountability by promoting co-designed continuous improvement practices that mitigate harm and bias in interpretation and reporting.
- D. Improve cross-system data coordination and learning within King County, and with municipal and other partners.

## **6. Invest Early, Invest Often, Invest in Community-Informed Outcomes**

- A. Continue to invest in promotion, prevention, and early intervention activities supporting child and youth development from prenatal to age 24.
- B. Continue to invest in grassroots youth- and community-based solutions that are culturally relevant and reflective of the communities' identified needs.
- C. Invest in outcomes that are linked to community learning and informed by research.
- D. Work across County agencies and departments and with external partners such as local jurisdictions and service providers to identify gaps in funding by geography and issue area, and work to resource underinvested areas.

## **7. Implementation, Accountability, and Evaluation**

- A. Ensure the Children and Youth Advisory Board (CYAB) and the County maintain a shared accountability for the implementation of the Youth Action Plan Recommendations, including reviews every five years.
- B. Set forth plans to create a King County Youth Commission.
- C. Ensure the Children, Youth, and Young Adult Division (CYYAD) Director, and their designee(s), continues to liaise between the CYAB, the King County Executive, and King County Council on the implementation of the Youth Action Plan recommendations and County investments and initiatives related to children, youth, and families.
- D. In the event there are significant changes in the County's capacity to invest in children, youth, and families through levies or other funding streams, the Youth Action Plan will be reviewed for policy alignment and prioritization.

## **8. Youth Bill of Rights**

- A. Utilize the King County Youth Bill of Rights as a formal guide when considering policies and budgetary decisions that impact children and youth.
- B. Update the Youth Bill of Rights every five years.

## **9. Strengthen the Community-Based Organization Ecosystem**

- A. Increase the ease of access for Community Based Organizations to apply for and receive funding across all King County Departments.
- B. Recognize the full cost of providing services in contracts, including wages and benefits, and annual increases keeping up with inflation.
- C. Fund multi-year and general operating support grants and contracts wherever possible.
- D. Provide low-barrier capacity building support across all King County departments funding community-based organizations and nonprofits.
- E. Support the ecosystem of children and youth serving organizations through resource coordination and entities like intermediaries and coalitions that have expertise and community trust.
- F. Partner with, and learn from, local and national philanthropic partners and other public funders to ensure sector strength and sustainability.

## Conclusion

Since the Youth Action Plan was first adopted 10 years ago, King County has made important strides in investing in the health and well-being of young people. The voter approved Best Starts for Kids levy has enabled King County to transform its approach to be more inclusive across age groups, prenatal to age 24, and across strategies that include upstream promotion and prevention programming. Steadfast continuous internal improvements will be critical to sustaining the progress made thus far. Informed by King County's youth, the 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendations serve as a recipe to see every baby born and child raised in King County reach adulthood happy, healthy, safe, and thriving.

## II. Background

### Department of Community and Human Services

King County's Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) provides equitable opportunities for people to be healthy, happy, and connected to community. DCHS envisions a welcoming community that is racially just, where the field of human services exists to undo and mitigate unfair structures. The Department, along with a network of community providers and partners, plays a leading role in creating and coordinating the region's human services infrastructure. DCHS stewards the revenue from the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy, the Best Starts for Kids levy, the MIDD behavioral health sales tax fund (MIDD), the Health Through Housing sales tax, and the Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA), along with other state and federally directed revenues.<sup>16, 17, 18, 19, 20</sup>

The DCHS Children, Youth, and Young Adult Division (CYAD) delivers re-engagement, education, and employment services for youth and young adults. It is home to the Best Starts Child Care Strategy and several Best Starts Sustain the Gain investments serving young people ages 5 to 24, the Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account's K-12, community, and post-secondary investments, and the County's youth diversion initiative.

The DCHS Performance, Measurement, and Evaluation (PME) unit collaborates with internal and external partners to use data to understand the implementation and impact of investment strategies and programs administered by the Department, including those that serve children and youth. Working with Public Health's Assessment, Policy Development, and Evaluation (APDE) unit, DCHS has built and maintained a qualitative and quantitative data infrastructure to track and learn from investments like Best Starts, the Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account, and others.

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<sup>16</sup> Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>17</sup> King County Best Starts for Kids initiative [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>18</sup> MIDD behavioral health sales tax fund (MIDD) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>19</sup> Health Through Housing sales tax [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>20</sup> Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account [\[LINK\]](#)

## Public Health Seattle and King County

Public Health – Seattle & King County (Public Health) works to protect and improve the health and well-being of all people in King County.<sup>21</sup> Public Health is one of the largest metropolitan health departments in the United States with approximately 1,600 employees. The department serves 2.3 million people of King County who reside in urban, rural, shoreline, foothill, and mountain communities. Department functions are carried out through prevention and intervention programs, environmental health programs, community-oriented health care services, emergency medical services, correctional facility health services, preparedness programs, and community-based public health assessment and practices. Public Health also provides data, reports, and other health related information to the public and stakeholders. DCHS partners with Public Health to co-lead the Best Starts initiative, and both departments house various Best Starts investment strategies.

## Children and Youth Advisory Board

The King County Children and Youth Advisory Board is an Executive-appointed and Council-confirmed board of up to 40 people who live in King County. Board members share a common goal to ensure the welfare and future of children, families, babies, youth, and young adults in the region. Established in 2016, the CYAB serves in an oversight and advisory capacity to the King County Executive, the King County Council, the Best Starts Initiative, and the Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account. The CYAB responds to Recommendation Area 7 of the Youth Action Plan on Accountability and is staffed by DCHS.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the CYAB elevates the voices of Black, African American, Indigenous, and people of color in governing board decisions, and supports King County to advance policies and practices that will undo inequities and promote comprehensive well-being for communities.

In 2023, the CYAB called upon King County to update the Youth Action Plan. Their letter stated:

*“The current Youth Action Plan was adopted by the King County Council in 2015. We recognize the incredible growth and successes that have occurred in the county over the past 8 years. In a recent review of the Youth Action Plan, we have come across an outdated plan that does not address the present realities of our young people ... Our world has changed dramatically after experiencing a global pandemic. This experience has highlighted major issues that our young people face daily. We have an incredible opportunity in renewing the Youth Action Plan by incorporating new resources to address these issues and support the holistic well-being of young people. We must honor the promises made by King County by updating policies on a regular basis.”<sup>23</sup>*

## Foundational Policies and Plans for the Update

Building off the original Youth Action Plan, the 2025 Youth Action Plan reflects ongoing advancements set forth in King County’s Equity and Social Justice Plan (2016-2022), the Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plans (2016-2021 and 2022-2027), the Implementation Plan for the Investment of Puget

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<sup>21</sup> Public Health – Seattle & King County [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>22</sup> King County Youth Action Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>23</sup> CYAB Letter to King County Executive (May 18th, 2023) [\[LINK\]](#)

Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account Proceeds (2020-2036), and the King County Youth Bill of Rights (2025).<sup>24, 25, 26, 27, 28</sup>

**Youth Action Plan (2015)**

2014, Ordinance 17738 called for the development of a Youth Action Plan to set King County's priorities for serving infants up to young adults.<sup>29, 30</sup> The Youth Action Plan was developed by a Task Force of 25 community leaders with input from youth and families, community members, experts in early childhood, youth development and education, and leaders across sectors. The Youth Action Plan, adopted by Motion 14378 in 2015, stipulates that the well-being of children, families, youth, and young adults should not be predicted by their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, geography, income, or immigration status.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the Youth Action Plan articulates direction for policy development, services, and programming to intentionally include diverse youth voices and voices of those people impacted by policies and services, in authentic and meaningful ways. See Appendix B for a more detailed list of King County's major bodies of work related to 2015 Youth Action Plan recommendations.

**Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plans (2016-2021 and 2022-2027)**

The 2015 Youth Action Plan was adopted on the eve of the first Best Starts for Kids levy (Best Starts), the County's comprehensive, voter-approved initiative to support every baby born and child raised in King County to reach adulthood happy, healthy, safe, and thriving. Prior to new Best Starts resources, County programs mainly focused on intervention programs for young people involved in the juvenile legal system, in detention centers, experiencing mental health and drug dependency crises, or outside traditional education systems.<sup>32</sup> As stated in the 2015 Youth Action Plan, "prevention is the most effective, least expensive way to put children and youth on a path toward success." Rather than responding to negative outcomes of issues such as obesity, mental illness, domestic violence, substance use, and homelessness, prevention and early intervention strategies aim to prevent and address these issues early on. By making investments in proven prevention strategies, the County will have the ability to decrease demand for more costly interventions and services needed when there's a negative outcome in a young person's life.<sup>33</sup>

The Best Starts for Kids levy enabled King County to increase investments in upstream promotion and prevention strategies that benefit families and the whole life span of young people, from prenatal to age 24. This includes a variety of strategies focused on:

- supporting healthy child development and family well-being through home-based services

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<sup>24</sup> King County's Equity and Social Justice Plan (2016-2022) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>25</sup> Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan (2016-2022) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>26</sup> Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan (2022-2027) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>27</sup> Implementation Plan for the Investment of Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account Proceeds (2020 - 2036) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>28</sup> King County Youth Bill of Rights (2025) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>29</sup> Ordinance 17738 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>30</sup> King County Youth Action Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>31</sup> Motion 14378 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>32</sup> King County Youth Action Plan, page 32 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>33</sup> King County Youth Action Plan, page 19-19 [\[LINK\]](#)

- supporting school- and community-based programs to support young people as they progress through childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood
- preventing youth and family homelessness
- strengthening communities through collective impact approaches
- expanding child care access for children and strengthening the child care workforce, and
- investing in buildings and facilities that will serve children and youth.

The 2025 Youth Action Plan considered these Best Starts investment strategies and their related progress while formulating specific recommendations to continue and advance progress made.<sup>34</sup>

***The Implementation Plan for Investment of Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account Proceeds (2020-2036)***

The Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA) expands upon King County's Best Starts for Kids' investments and strengthens equitable support for youth and young adults in the region, from early learning to college and career success. Created as an amendment to the 2015 State Transportation Revenue Package by the Washington State Legislature, PSTAA directs that funds from Sound Transit 3 sales and use tax offset fee be used to improve educational outcomes such as kindergarten readiness, high school graduation and postsecondary attainment.<sup>35</sup>

Between 2019 and 2036, King County is projected to receive \$318 million for the implementation of PSTAA strategies, with revenue collection being tied to Sound Transit 3 construction timelines. Current PSTAA investments include:

- Early learning facilities' construction, renovation, and maintenance
- Community-based programs, such as those offered by the "Love & Liberation" pilot, which strengthens racial and ethnic identity for BIPOC youth
- College, career, and technical education efforts, such as the "King County Promise" strategy, which aims to help students succeed in college

The 2025 Youth Action Plan considered PSTAA investment strategies and their related progress while formulating specific recommendations to continue and advance progress made.<sup>36</sup>

***Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan (2016 - 2022)***

In 2015, King County Executive created the Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ). The following year, OESJ produced the *2016-2022 Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan*.<sup>37</sup> This plan was created with input from more than 700 employees and 100 local organizations. The feedback gathered from employees and the community provided a body of data, evidence, and practices that informed strategies for King County to become a more equitable employer, service provider, and regional partner.

King County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan launched around the same time that voters approved the first Best Starts levy. This was a pivotal moment, redefining how King County invests in its young people, and marking a shift toward:

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<sup>34</sup> See Best Starts for Kids 1-pagers on each strategy and annual reports since 2016. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>35</sup> Revised Code of Washington 43.79.520 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>36</sup> See King County Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>37</sup> King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

- Applying a theory of change that fundamentally shifts the County away from policies and practices that react to problems and crises toward investments that address the root causes of inequities, ultimately leading to better quality of life and greater prosperity in all our communities.
- Balancing a bold vision with actionable and measurable objectives.
- Allowing for innovation and adaptability across King County government to be more dynamic and culturally responsive, moving towards the goal of being racially just internally and in the community.<sup>38</sup>

The Youth Action Plan and the 2016-2022 ESJ Strategic Plan are aligned in calling to invest upstream and where needs are greatest, in employees and in community partnerships, with accountable and transparent leadership.<sup>39</sup> At the time of writing this report, a process to update the ESJ Strategic Plan is underway. An updated Equity, Racial and Social Justice Strategic Plan is anticipated to be published in 2026.

### ***The King County Youth Bill of Rights (2025)***

Youth Action Plan Recommendation Area 8 called for a bill of rights for King County's youth akin to the youth bills of rights that jurisdictions in California and elsewhere around the country have adopted.<sup>40</sup> As outlined in the Youth Action Plan, a youth bill of rights lays the foundational framework for policymakers, youth, and the community, defining a shared vision for the future and making a place for youth voice in policy decisions. It is a foundational framework that serves to hold public officials accountable for considering the impact of their decisions on the well-being of children and youth. It also provides youth a concrete tool with which to draw attention to their needs and interests. At all times, but especially during times of political change and financial upheaval, a bill of rights helps King County, and the community, stay focused on children and youth as a priority. Importantly, it keeps the spotlight on all children, from all racial and cultural backgrounds, income levels, family structures, and developmental abilities.<sup>41</sup>

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At all times, but especially during times of political change and financial upheaval, a bill of rights helps King County, and the community, stay focused on children and youth as a priority.

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DCHS worked with young people to develop the Youth Bill of Rights from 2021 to 2024. The King County Council adopted the Youth Bill of Rights in January 2025 with Motion 16772.<sup>42</sup> The ten priorities outlined in the Youth Bill of Rights articles are integrated into the nine updated Youth Action Plan recommendation areas. The entire Youth Bill of Rights is included below in Recommendation Area 8: Youth Bill of Rights.

1. Basic Needs and Well-being (See Recommendation 2.1)
2. Health (See Recommendation 2.5)
3. Education and Learning (See Recommendation 2.4)

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<sup>38</sup> King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>39</sup> King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>40</sup> King County Youth Action Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>41</sup> King County Youth Action Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>42</sup> Motion No. 16672 [\[LINK\]](#)

4. Equity and Social Justice (See Recommendation 1)
5. Safety and Security (See Recommendation 3B)
6. Community and Belonging (See Recommendation 1)
7. Environment (See Recommendation 2.4)
8. Transportation (See Recommendation 2.1)
9. Youth Voice (See Recommendation areas 1, 7, and 8)
10. Sports & Recreation (See recommendation 2.4)

### Timeline and Methodology for the 2025 update to the Youth Action Plan

DCHS initiated the Youth Action Plan update process in mid-2023 and completed in late 2025. DCHS staff and a consultant managed the Youth Action Plan update team comprised of a broad selection of managers and data scientists from across DCHS and Public Health.<sup>43</sup> The Children and Youth Advisory Board provided guidance, feedback, and approval of the final set of recommendations as noted below<sup>44</sup> The timeline for completing the 2025 Youth Action Plan took place over six phases:

#### **Phase 1: Review and synthesize Youth Action Plan progress since 2015 (September 2023 – January 2024)**

King County gathered significant input and knows a great deal about the needs and aspirations of young people through youth and community engagement activities over recent years. Rather than duplicate these processes, the Youth Action Plan update team reviewed recent County documents and reports to synthesize the progress since 2015 related to the nine Youth Action Plan recommendation areas. These include: The Youth Bill of Rights recommendations (2024); Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account's (PSTAA) Love and Liberation Assessment Report (June 2023); Care and Closure: Final Strategic Planning Report on the Future of Secure Juvenile Legal Detention (August 2023); Best Starts for Kids Annual Report – Learning, Growing, and Thriving (2022); Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan: 2022-2027; King County Community Safety and Well-being Plan Recommendations (2021); Equitable and Accessible Child Care in King County: Recommendations from the Children and Families Strategy Task Force (September 2020).<sup>45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51</sup>

Through this phase, the Youth Action Plan update team identified eight priority themes: stabilizing resources and basic needs; maternal wellness; access to child care; behavioral health; strengthening community-based organizations (CBOs); increased youth voice; increased parent and family input; and ending youth incarceration as it currently exists.

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<sup>43</sup> The DCHS Youth Action Plan Policy and Program Manager worked closely with Moon Snail Consulting, under the guidance of the Director & Deputy Director of the Children, Youth, and Young Adults Division throughout the Youth Action Plan update process.

<sup>44</sup> See CYAB approved minutes for November 12, 2024 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>45</sup> The Youth Bill of Rights recommendations [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>46</sup> Love and Liberation Assessment Report, 2023 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>47</sup> Care and Closure: Final Strategic Planning Report on the Future of Secure Juvenile Legal Detention, 2023 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>48</sup> Best Starts for Kids 2022 Annual Report [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>49</sup> Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan: 2022-2027 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>50</sup> King County Community Safety and Well-being Plan Recommendations, 2021 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>51</sup> Equitable and Accessible Child Care in King County: Recommendations from the Children and Families Strategy Task Force, 2020 [\[LINK\]](#)

**Phase 2: Review emergent themes with community and ask, ‘Did we get it right?’ (January 2024 – May 2024)**

The Youth Action Plan update team reviewed priority themes with 15 community groups and coalitions, convening over 300 people, to ask, ‘did we get it right?’ And ‘what’s missing?’<sup>52</sup> In community engagement sessions, participants discussed themes, brainstormed recommendations and solutions, and suggested areas needing attention, such as youth mental health and sustainability of CBOs. Recommendations from the community engagement sessions were synthesized to inform the next phase of the project.

**Phase 3: Leverage County expertise to further inform recommendation areas (April 2024 – July 2024)**

While the original Youth Action Plan leaned on the expertise of community task force members, the Youth Action Plan update process leveraged the internal expertise of County staff. Following feedback from community on emerging themes, the Youth Action Plan update team convened 29 DCHS and Public Health program managers and data scientists with expertise on children, youth, and families to help shape specific recommendations, and ensure alignment with other County policies and strategic plans.

**Phase 4: Update the Youth Action Plan Section on well-being of children and youth in King County: (August 2024 – September 2024)**

The Youth Action Plan update team worked with DCHS’ Performance, Measurement, and Evaluation Unit and Public Health’s Assessment, Policy Development, and Evaluation (APDE) unit to create a snapshot of how children, youth, and families are faring in King County.

**Phase 5: Synthesize input, draft recommendations, gather feedback (July 2024 – December 2024)**

The Youth Action Plan update team synthesized the input gathered from community and County contributors and began drafting the Youth Action Plan report and recommendations. The team shared the final set of recommendations with contributors for review, and the CYAB approved the recommendations in November 2024.

**Phase 6: Finalize report writing (January 2025 – October 2025)**

DCHS staff finalized the updated Youth Action Plan report. This included final synthesis of information in the report, including a comparison of the 2015 and 2025 Youth Action Plans.

### **III. Summary of How Children and Youth are Faring in King County**

This section provides a summary of how children and youth are faring in King County. The summary is based on broad selection of data reports and research provided in Appendix A. Overall, the data provided in the snapshot assessment of well-being among young people in King County points to relative stability and modest improvement in some areas, ongoing concerns or declines in other areas, and persistence of disparities in outcomes based on race, gender, housing status and place.

For example, while adverse birth outcomes remained stable over time, the disparities in birth outcomes and prenatal care based on race continue to persist. King County’s on-time high school graduation rate

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<sup>52</sup> The list of community groups that DCHS engaged can be found in Appendix C.

has increased by 7 percent since 2015, yet disparities persist by race and place. The prevalence of exclusionary discipline is lower than pre-pandemic levels overall, yet disparities persist by student race, gender, and housing status. The percentage of high school students feeling safe remained relatively stable over time, though Transgender students were less likely to report feeling safe. The percentage of high school students in 2023 reporting alcohol or drug use in the last 30 days is lower than 2016 percentages overall.<sup>53</sup>

The data also point to issues of ongoing concern or declining outcomes. Since 2014,<sup>54</sup> the state gained 3,000 child care slots, but the population of children under age 6 grew by nearly 30,000. One-fourth of King County families reported challenges finding child care that met their needs (2020-2023). The prevalence of depression among high schoolers has improved slightly since 2020, yet remains concerning at one in four students overall, and rising to nearly 50 percent of LGB+-identifying students.<sup>54</sup> Student homelessness remains a concern with young people under the age of 25 representing roughly 16 percent of the households receiving services from the homeless response system. A higher percentage of youth were shooting victims in a gun violence incident in 2024 than in past years. Overall, half of Washington college students report experiencing basic needs insecurity, with over 10 percent having experienced homelessness. In King County, most 16- to 24-year-olds are in school or employed, though far fewer high school graduates successfully transition to work or post-secondary education.<sup>55</sup>

The 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendations reflect each of the data themes highlighted in this section.

## IV. Youth Action Plan Principles

In 2014, the Youth Action Plan Task Force identified three fundamental principles that are embedded within each of the 2015 Youth Action Plan recommendations. The CYAB maintained and consolidated the 2015 principles into the 2025 Youth Action Plan principles 2 and 3 below. The 2025 Youth Action Plan fundamental principles also include a new principle on striving for optimal well-being, healing, and joy. This principle reflects the need for King County government to sustain aspirational goals for happiness and thriving lives for all young people, not limiting goals to prevent and address negative outcomes only. The CYAB urges King County and its community partners to reflect these principles in their policies, priorities, services, and programs moving forward.

1. **Strive for optimal well-being, healing, and joy.** King County should continue to strive for optimal well-being as defined by the affected, and remain grounded in the belief that all children, youth, and

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<sup>53</sup> 2023 Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Illicit drugs” from the dropdown on” choose another indicator” [Data Dashboard - Healthy Youth Survey](#)

<sup>54</sup> The acronym LGB+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, plus) is used in the Healthy Youth Survey and data reported in this section. The acronym LGBTQIA+ is an acronym often used as an umbrella term referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex individuals. The “+” stands for “plus,” which recognizes additional sexual orientations and gender identities that are not explicitly identified in the acronym. LGBTQIA+ is used throughout the rest of the Youth Action Plan.

<sup>55</sup> See Appendix A: “While most 16- to 24-year-olds are in school or employed, far fewer high school graduates successfully transition to work or postsecondary.”

families deserve to be happy, healthy, safe, and thriving. The well-being of children and families should always be a governmental priority; not just about preventing negative outcomes. As young people and families continue to heal from the loss and disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, King County should prioritize space for young people's healing and joy. Thriving communities will require that King County approach the work with empathy and compassion, not only as a fiscal and political investment.

2. **The well-being of children, youth, young adults, and families should not be predicted by their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, geography, income, or immigration status.** Given ongoing data on disproportionate outcomes that many young people in the county experience, King County should prioritize eliminating disproportionate outcomes for its residents.
3. **Child and youth policy development, services, and programming should intentionally include the people impacted by the policies and services in authentic and meaningful ways.** King County can continue to move its work forward by engaging youth and young adults in decision-making, as well as the parents and caregivers of young children. By including diverse perspectives, King County will improve services and programs, and will in turn, improve outcomes for young people and their families.

## V. Summary of Changes in the 2025 Youth Action Plan Recommendations

This section provides a summary of what is consistent, and what has changed, in the 2015 and 2025 Youth Action Plan. Overall, the 2025 Youth Action Plan maintains the general structure and recommendation areas of the 2015 plan while making a few changes to area titles.<sup>56</sup>

### Changes in Recommendation Area titles

The 2025 Youth Action Plan changed the title language for recommendation areas 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7, reflecting progress and learnings; recommendation area 9 was combined with area 7 due to progress in implementing the Youth Action Plan since 2015; and the plan introduces a new recommendation area 9 to reflect the growing role of community-based organizations in delivering human services. For a detailed summary of these changes, see Table 1 below.

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<sup>56</sup> The "recommendation areas" refer to the nine overarching policy areas that contain and organize all the Youth Action Plan recommendations. The recommendation area "titles" refer to the title for each recommendation area. There are multiple recommendations within each area, and subsequently there are multiple sub-recommendations and/or detailed descriptions for each of the recommendations.

**Table 1** Changes to the recommendation area title language and the rationale for the changes.

<b>2015 Youth Action Plan Recommendation Area Title</b>	<b>Updated Recommendation Area Title in 2025 Youth Action Plan</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
1. Social Justice and Equity	1. Lead with Equity, Racial, and Social Justice	This language aligns with updated language of King County, including the Office of Equity and Racial and Social Justice (ERSJ), and the forthcoming ERSJ Strategic Plan.
4. Bust Siloes/We're Better Together	4. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration and Collective Impact	The change reflects King County's progress internally in busting siloes, and the changed external landscape of youth development coalitions and collectives. It also draws attention to the need for strengthening cross-sector collaboration.
5. Get Smart About Data	5. Be Data Informed and Data Inclusive	The change reflects the establishment of new data and evaluation units within DCHS and Public Health the ongoing need to use this data to inform decisions. It also underscores the importance of including community and young people's experiences.
6. Invest Early, Invest Often, Invest in Outcomes	6. Invest Early, Invest Often, Invest in Community-Informed Outcomes	Introducing 'community' underscores the importance of community partnership in identifying outcomes.
7. Accountability	7. Implementation, Accountability and Evaluation (combined 7 and 9 for clarity)	Youth Action Plan Recommendation Area 9 - Evaluation was combined with recommendation area 7 to reduce redundancy and provide clarity given progress implementing the 2015 Youth Action Plan.
	9. New: Strengthen the Community Based Organization Ecosystem	This recommendation area reflects the important role community-based organizations have in providing services and programs to young people in King County.

### Consistencies and changes between the 2015 to 2025 plans

The 2025 recommendations are generally consistent with 2015 recommendations, particularly in terms of values, themes, populations, and urgency. This includes reiterating an overall commitment to eliminating institutional racism and other forms of bias. The 2025 recommendations also re-emphasize and further elaborate on priorities such as ensuring services for and centering the voices of the most impacted youth (and their communities), continuing promotion and prevention efforts, sustaining efforts to mitigate harm and bias in data interpretation and reporting, ensuring access to basic needs, and addressing urgent intervention needs such as behavioral health services and youth homelessness.

The 2025 recommendations introduced new recommendations to address recent and emerging community priorities and address gaps from the 2015 Youth Action Plan. This includes improving equitable and affordable access to child care and digital technology, ensuring workforce development as part of upstream efforts, establishing a King County Youth Commission, developing an integrated referral system and resource database network, and continuing a focus on gun violence prevention and community-based alternatives to secure youth detention. Likewise, the new recommendation area on strengthening the community-based organization ecosystem reflects the important role that community-based organizations play in partnering with King County to deliver culturally responsive, accessible services and programs.

Please see Appendix E for more information and comparisons between the 2015 and 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendations.

## VI. 2025 Youth Action Plan Recommendations

This section includes each of the nine 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendation areas. Each recommendation area opens with a brief introduction before listing specific recommendations relevant to the area. Recommendation Area 2: Strengthen and stabilize families, children, youth, and young adults is the largest recommendation area as it contains seven recommendations specific to advancing the well-being of young people in King County.

### Recommendation Area 1: Lead with Equity, Racial and Social Justice<sup>57</sup>

As the section on how young people are faring in King County shows, disparities in outcomes experienced by BIPOC children and youth persist. King County should remain steadfast in its commitment to eliminating institutional racism by addressing the root causes of inequities and improving the health and well-being of all King County residents.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, for King County to be intentionally anti-racist, it should remain committed to centering Black and Indigenous communities when developing solutions that aim to repair the harm and to bring healing to these communities.<sup>59</sup> With recognition of the ongoing need to eliminate inequities and ensure all of King County's residents can thrive, the CYAB recommends King County:

**A. Identify, prevent, and eliminate institutional racism and other forms of bias within County divisions and departments providing supports to children, youth, and families, including contracting processes.**

- Build and promote an anti-racist culture across King County's departments and agencies that serve children, youth, and families.
- Focus on improving internal systems and enabling King County staff to make equitable decisions and become change agents regarding policies, resources, and employees.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Formerly Equity and Social Justice in the original King County Youth Action Plan (2015).

<sup>58</sup> King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan 2016-2022 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>59</sup> Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>60</sup> The Equity Impact Review Process can serve as a helpful guide [\[LINK\]](#)

- Continue to provide technical assistance to refugee, immigrant, culturally specific, and/or smaller organizations to develop and deliver quality services, improve sustainability, and partner with King County to serve children, families, youth, and young adults.
- Align County-funded services and programs for children and their families, youth, and young adults with other County plans.

**B. Ensure young people and others with limited access to decision makers are engaged as partners in determining the services and activities meant to serve them.**

- Prioritize authentic youth engagement by providing ongoing opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes that affect them, their families, and communities. Compensate young people for their time and credit them for their ideas. Partner with existing community-led youth leadership models when possible.
- Ensure that efforts to reach the following youth and young adult populations who are historically poorly served by systems and furthest from justice are intentional and incorporate effective engagement strategies:
  - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth.
  - Immigrant, refugee, and/or youth whose first language is not English.
  - Young people who are disengaged from school or work.
  - Young people enrolled in alternative education programs.
  - Young people with disabilities.
  - Youth involved in foster and/or kinship care.
  - Young people experiencing homelessness.
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex individuals, plus (LGBTQIA+) additional sexual orientations and gender identities that are not explicitly identified in the acronym LGBTQIA+.
  - Criminal legal system-involved youth and young adults.
  - Young people who are pregnant or parenting or supporting family members.
  - Young people living with addiction.

**C. Ensure opportunities for youth to grow up happy, healthy, safe, and thriving are linguistically and culturally appropriate, accessible, and meet the needs of diverse communities throughout King County.**

- Recognize areas of need, culturally diverse communities, and those experiencing poverty throughout urban and rural areas of King County, including unincorporated King County.
- Ensure that programs and services for children, youth, and young adult populations account for the diverse geographic and cultural communities within King County, are community-based and localized; not one size fits all approach.
- Integrate cultural responsiveness, including making sure linguistic needs are met.
- Ensure adequate outreach, translation, and interpretation services are available for immigrants, refugees, and/or youth whose first language is not English.

**D. Build a strategy of belonging within King County government and with partners to combat social isolation and ensure inclusion of young people and the adults who support them.**

- Recognize belonging as a fundamental human need, defined as the feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences.<sup>61</sup>
- Use the Othering and Belonging Institute's Belonging Design Principles to create a strategy of belonging within King County that includes: 1) The root of the problem is othering; 2) Everyone belongs; 3) Prioritize structural change; 4) Recognize and address power dynamics; 5) Foster agency and inclusive co-creation; 6) Embrace mutual responsibility; 7) Celebrate and value diversity; 8) Recognize that identities are multifaceted and dynamic; 9) Prioritize and value relationships; 10) Harness the power of interconnection.<sup>62</sup>

**E. Partner with appropriate organizations to encourage voting.**

**Recommendation Area 2: Strengthen and Stabilize Families, Children, Youth, and Young Adults**

This recommendation area outlines priorities and strategies for strengthening and stabilizing young people and families in King County. This section is organized by each priority recommendation, which further details recommended strategies to guide approaches and investments. The priorities outlined below include recommendations on meeting basic needs of children, youth and families; ensuring wellbeing of pregnant and parenting persons and primary caregivers; improving equity, access, and affordability of child care; improving access to expanded learning and youth development for school-aged children and youth; expanding behavioral health supports and services, and deepening efforts to engage families of young people being served.

**2.1 Meet the Basic Needs of Children, Youth, and Families**

Through the Youth Bill of Rights (YBOR) project, young people declared the importance of having their basic needs met first. It is critical for King County to dedicate the resources that can respond to these essential needs, which enable young people and families to pursue goals and outcomes that contribute to their overall health and well-being.<sup>63</sup>

To meet the basic needs of children, youth and families in King County, the CYAB recommends that King County:

- A. Ensure access to fresh or shelf stable, nutritious, culturally relevant, and affordable food from birth and beyond.**
- B. Meet the health and safety needs of infants, toddlers, and youth by ensuring seasonally and age-appropriate clothing and hygiene for sleep, home, and school.**
- C. Ensure housing stability and access to safe shelter for youth and young adults and reduce the disproportionate number of LGBTQIA+ youth and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) youth who experience homelessness or housing instability.**

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<sup>61</sup> Allen KA, Kern ML, Rozek CS, McInerney D, & Slavich GM. Belonging: A Review of Conceptual Issues, an Integrative Framework, and Directions for Future Research. *Aust J Psychol.* 2021;73(1):87-102. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>62</sup> Belonging Design Principles, Othering and Belonging Institute [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>63</sup> King County Youth Bill of Rights [\[LINK\]](#)

- D. Ensure livable wage youth and young adult employment initiatives with benefits, including second chance employment opportunities for young people who have been involved in the criminal legal system.<sup>64</sup>**
- E. Ensure digital equity and access to current technology (Wi-Fi, software, and hardware) necessary for navigating life, school, and work.**
- F. Ensure safe and accessible transportation options including walkability, public transportation access, and alternatives in transportation deserts.**

## 2.2 Ensure the Well-being of Pregnant and Parenting Persons and Primary Caregivers

With Best Starts funding, Public Health’s Maternal and Child Health services are delivered in home, clinic, and community settings to pregnant individuals and parenting families. The services address gaps in basic needs and improve health outcomes for newborns and families with a focus on addressing racial disparities and increasing access to health services.<sup>65</sup> Despite increased programs and services towards prenatal care and maternal well-being in King County, disparities and poor outcomes are still significant in 2024, particularly for women of color.<sup>66</sup>

To ensure the well-being of all pregnant and parenting persons and primary caregivers, the CYAB recommends that King County:

- A. Ensure access to anti-racist pre-conception care, family planning, and health education.**
  - Ensure appropriate, culturally responsive care to address issues based on community data, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other relevant information to increase safety.
  - Ensure health education is inclusive of strong nutrition including breast and chest feeding.
- B. Address racism, discrimination, bias, and stigma in perinatal care (during pregnancy, and the months following birth) in partnership with community.**
  - Ensure training for medical professionals on racial equity and social justice practices.
  - Support, create, and amplify policies that support families in receiving accessible and appropriate care rooted in anti-racist practices.
  - Support maternal, parent, and caregiver health through pregnancy and post birth, prioritizing culturally rooted and accessible programs and services in home and community.
  - Fund community-based organizations to lead stakeholder collaborations to design new culturally responsive systems of care deliberately designed to serve women of color and LGBTQIA+ communities.

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<sup>64</sup> One resource on living wage income is the UW Self-Sufficiency Standard Calculator [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>65</sup> Best Starts One-pager on Maternal and Child Health Services [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>66</sup> While King County’s overall infant mortality rate of 4.1 deaths per 1,000 births between 2019-2021 is below the national average rate of 5.4, according to CDC data, Black and Native babies are dying at a higher rate, one that is comparable to states that have the worst infant death rates in the U.S. See Black and Native Infants in King County are Dying at a Higher Rate [\[LINK\]](#)

- Convene collaborations led by community-based organizations that bring representatives of relevant systems (home visiting, domestic violence, health plans, TANF, etc.) together to recommend integrated supports for families.
- Support community designed programming that is culturally rooted and wraps around services for families before and after birth such as community designed home-based services, Family Ways, and peer-to-peer supports.

**C. Expand equitable and high-quality health care by improving care integration, expanding telehealth services, and increasing reimbursement.**

- Support efforts to reduce pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality and include utilization and understanding of Medicaid coverage for 12 months after giving birth.
- Expand and diversify the perinatal workforce such as specialists, doulas, moms' support groups, family resource centers, and other community-based care coordinators that are culturally congruent and can supplement clinical care to improve outcomes.

**D. Increase access to mental health and substance use disorder prevention, screening, and treatment for pregnant and parenting people. (Also see recommendations 2.5- Behavioral Health)**

- Ensure effective referrals for community-based resources, including doulas, support groups, and mental health care providers.
- Expand programming to support early relational health and full family behavioral health including the expansion of providers that are of and from the community.
- Require collaboration between health agencies and aligned agencies (such as child welfare agencies) to approach maternal substance use from a public health perspective. Avoid a surveillance, research, and accountability framework, as that may make screening and support seem dangerous or intrusive to birthing people.
- Promote safety in the perinatal period through survivor-centered and culturally appropriate coordinated services.

## 2.3 Improve Equity, Access, and Affordability of Child Care

Families in King County struggle to afford the cost of care, there are not enough child care slots to meet the demand, and child care providers continue to earn poverty wages. Access to child care benefits everyone, yet the crises of affordability, supply, and work force fall hardest upon women and people of color.<sup>67</sup> Child care is a critical infrastructure. Equitable access to high-quality, affordable child care is essential for King County's ability to recover from financial downturn in ways that improve racial and gender equity while strengthening communities and the economy.

To ensure parents and young children are well served by a sustainable, thriving child care sector, the CYAB recommends that King County:

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<sup>67</sup> Equitable and Accessible Child Care in King County: Recommendations from the Children and Families Strategy Task Force (September 30, 2020) [[LINK](#)]

**A. Build alignment and commitment across government jurisdictions to support an equitable, accessible, and thriving child care system.**

- Continue implementing the recommendations of the Children and Families Strategy Task Force to work toward a thriving and equitable system that meets the needs of all families and providers.
- Support Federal and State efforts to implement universal access to child care and early learning programs including access to living wages for workers.
- Strengthen relationships and continue progress with the City of Seattle’s Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL), other cities within King County, and other government jurisdictions.
- Continue following the lead of child care providers, families, and caregivers in identifying and implementing policy solutions.

**B. Transform and improve subsidy and funding models for child care providers, including wages and capital projects.**

- Ensure reimbursement rates and subsidies are based on the true cost of care, not market rates, with a focus on thriving wages. Proactive payments should be based on enrollment, not attendance. Use data from the 2024 Washington State Cost of Quality Child Care and Market Rate Study or future studies to understand the cost of providing the service, including thriving wages versus what families can afford to pay.<sup>68</sup>
- Prioritize funding innovative approaches (e.g. removing activity requirements for caregivers) using more flexible King County funding, as well as filling gaps in the system experienced by King County residents.
- Continue to invest in child care capital projects and expand funding to make supplies and materials needed to run a child care business eligible for funding.

**C. Partner with the Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families to ensure licensing and regulations are just, resourced, and responsive to families and providers.**

- Inform the development and ongoing adjustment of licensing and regulations policies and practices.
- Support alternative models to credentialing, especially community-based pathways.
- Increase the pipeline of child care and early learning providers, specifically from Black and brown communities, by supporting the removal of barriers that hinder the hiring and retention of those currently working in the field. Pursue strategies to increase the number of BIPOC providers in leadership and ownership roles.

**D. Ensure children with diverse developmental and behavioral needs are supported through inclusion-driven programs in the classroom and in school.**

- Ensure children with developmental needs and disabilities in care settings have access to resources and services that meet their needs.
- Make language access for families, children and programs representative of the languages spoken within King County.

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<sup>68</sup> DCYF 2024 Child Care Market Rate Study [[LINK](#)]

- Ensure child care providers are trained in anti-bias, empathy, cultural responsiveness, and restorative justice practices that help eliminate exclusionary discipline (suspensions or expulsions).
- Build a referral network and ensure wrap around services are accessible to children with diverse developmental and behavioral needs.

**E. Serve as a role model and advocate for caregiver friendly workplaces.**

- Model best practices for employers by investing in a portfolio of supports for King County employees and families in different roles who are caregiving, including expanded paid parental leave, flexible schedules, “babes in arms” policies, on-site child care, and temporary reassignment.
- Engage with Chambers of Commerce and other business groups to advocate for family friendly workplaces, subsidized child care for their employees, and other solutions.

## 2.4 Improve Access to Expanded Learning and Youth Development for School-Aged Children, Youth, and Young Adults

Young people spend nearly 80 percent of their waking hours outside of school. Therefore, young people having safe, high quality expanded learning activities is essential to sustain gains made in early childhood. King County investments through Best Starts and PSTAA funding have been critical to increasing access to school-aged child care, expanded learning, and youth development programs that build agency, a sense of belonging, and future orientation.

To support the well-being of school-aged children during non-school hours, the CYAB recommends that King County:

**A. Ensure continued funding for high quality, culturally responsive programming for school-aged youth from ages 5-24 during before and after school hours.**

- Ensure accessibility and affordability for elementary-aged children with a continuum of licensed school-aged child care programs and free or low cost expanded learning opportunities before and after school.
- Embed Social Emotional Learning, College, and Career readiness, 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill development and cultural identity development as essential skills and competencies developed in expanded learning or afterschool programs.
- Ensure programming is financially and geographically accessible, including a range of experiences from play-based learning and sports to opportunities in the arts.
- Support refugee, immigrant, and English language learner families’ equitable access to supportive transitions, including transition to college.

**B. Strengthen partnerships between schools, school districts, and expanded learning providers.**

- Encourage equitable partnerships among providers and schools that enhance alignment between the school day and after school programs.
- Support relationship building between school and CBO staff members to ensure access to school buildings during non-school hours and data sharing.

**C. Ensure access to high quality summer learning and experiential learning activities, including workforce development and economic opportunities.**

- Provide a diversity of enrichment activities that mitigate learning loss in the summer.
- Strengthen career readiness programs including job shadowing, internships and apprenticeships like the Seattle Youth Employment Program and King County's Green Jobs Initiative.
- Create new opportunities to explore high growth career areas like technology and the environment.

## 2.5 Expand Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Use) Supports and Services

Young people in King County deserve a full continuum of services that promote positive behavioral health and well-being. As young people develop, they need opportunities to grow their strengths and identities, develop healthy relationships with adults and peers, and access a range of developmentally and culturally appropriate supports when they experience challenges.<sup>69</sup> Investments across this continuum, from promoting young people's inherent strength and worth to providing opportunities for treatment, harm reduction, recovery, and healing are critical to creating the conditions for King County's youth to thrive.<sup>70</sup> Gaps remain across the continuum of support, and King County's youth behavioral health treatment and crisis response systems are under-resourced and insufficient to address the severity of emergent needs.

Delayed access to care, social isolation, and developmental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic must be addressed. Likewise, the magnitude of the opioid and fentanyl crises continues to present challenges and substance use risks for young people.<sup>71</sup> Complex cases, for example co-occurring mental health, substance use disorder, intellectual and developmental disabilities, result in children and young people getting "stuck" in emergency departments or detention without a clear or timely pathway to appropriate care and treatment.<sup>72, 73</sup> Parents, caregivers, and families need support for their children and themselves as they navigate challenging situations and complex systems.

To support the mental health, well-being, and healing of young people, the CYAB recommends that King County:

**A. Expand definition and delivery of youth behavioral health supports.**

- Consider the role of trusted adults and a supportive community in creating the necessary conditions for healing. Build opportunities for relational support, in addition to technical solutions.
- Ensure resources, therapists, peers, and practices to address behavioral health challenges are culturally relevant and responsive for all young people, especially BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ young people.

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<sup>69</sup> Bridging Prevention and Harm Reduction Strategies for Adolescent and Young Adult Substance Use. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>70</sup> See Section III: Assessing Well-Being: The Current Landscape of Children and Youth and Section IV. Overview of Progress on Youth Action Plan since 2015 above.

<sup>71</sup> The Overdose Crisis Among US Adolescents [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>72</sup> See for example, Seattle Times Mental Health project [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>73</sup> Co-occurring mental disorders affect roughly two-thirds of incarcerated youth in the US. (Kaneda, 2017). [\[LINK\]](#)

- Ensure prevention and postvention for traumatic death and harm reduction, including alternative approaches to individualized therapy, and increased cultural and community connection in behavioral health settings.<sup>74</sup>
- Promote a diverse and varied youth behavioral health and healing workforce and retention, including creating a pipeline for young people with lived experience to enter the workforce.
- Improve coordination across King County departments and funding streams to ensure young people have access to the appropriate services and support for their unique behavioral health and well-being needs.

**B. Co-create and embed behavioral health support in youth development programs, schools, and other community-centered organizations.**

- Integrate behavioral health, recovery, healing, and well-being into the communities and places where young people are, such as community centers, arts-based programs, and schools.
- Strengthen partnerships with schools and ensure mental health and substance use prevention is available through School Based Health Centers (SBHC).
- Build opportunities for creativity and playfulness as they are at the heart of well-being, especially for young people.<sup>75</sup>
- Make flexible funding available for young people, including those who are uninsured or underinsured, to access a continuum of behavioral health support.

**C. Foster youth empowerment and leadership in behavioral health and create “by and for” opportunities for BIPOC & LGBTQIA+ Youth.**

- Inform all levels of planning and implementation with principles of youth empowerment and leadership.
- Dedicate sufficient resources, training, and support to support local systems and adult leaders to lean into youth-led approaches.
- Center young people, community, and cultural leaders and institutions in planning and implementation.

**D. Ensure a range of treatment options for both mental health and substance use disorders are available.**

- Increase in-home and respite services for parents and caregivers whose children are experiencing intensive mental health crises. A continuum of less restrictive alternatives, including caregiver coaching, are needed to support families experiencing acute mental health challenges.
- Build capacity of providers to treat youth with some combination of co-occurring substance use disorder, mental health disorder, and intellectual/developmental disability.
- Establish a county-wide postvention strategy, delivering a systemic response to traumatic events such as suicide, homicide, and other tragedies. Embed postvention services such as

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<sup>74</sup> Postvention refers to activities that reduce risk and promote healing after a suicide death. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>75</sup> Ginsburg, K. (2007). The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds, American Academy of Pediatrics [\[LINK\]](#)

grief counseling and behavioral health therapy into violence prevention and interruption programs serving impacted individuals and communities.

- Increase residential treatment beds for a step down or step up to Children’s Long-Term Inpatient Program for mental health, substance use disorder and co-occurring intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- Increase access to youth and family outpatient behavioral health outpatient services, including flexible entry strategies such as School Based SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment).
- Establish youth and young adult withdrawal management beds within King County.
- Expand treatment options for youth and young adult Opioid use disorder, including in-office and mobile Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD).

**E. Develop and support places and services for recovery, healing, and reentry.**

- Increase opportunities for young people in recovery from substance use disorder.
- Secure additional state and local funds for the public recovery high school at Seattle Public Schools’ Interagency Recovery Campus and establish at least one more location serving students in South King County.<sup>76</sup>
- Fund organizations that provide engaging, sober, and recovery-oriented activities for youth to develop connection and community outside school hours.
- Create an intentional transition back into the community for young people leaving inpatient facilities.

## 2.6 Increase Opportunities to Engage Whole Families in Youth Programming

For the most part, young people grow up in families, whether kinship care, foster families, intergenerational homes, and other types of family, yet parents and caregivers are often left out of programming focused on young people.

To support stronger family engagement, the Children and Youth Advisory Board recommends that King County:

**A. Increase opportunities for intergenerational resource sharing, learning, and community building.**

- Build more opportunities that respect and lift the voices of the parents/caregivers and young people as leaders and decision-makers in their own lives.
- Encourage programming that reduces sources of stress and isolation in families’ lives and increases social connections.
- Support parents/caregivers to understand phases of adolescent development and to increase the social and emotional competencies of young people.

**B. Provide culturally responsive workshops, trainings, and services to families to navigate systems and access supports.**

- Support parents, including multilingual parents and newcomers, to navigate schools and school districts.

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<sup>76</sup> Association of Recovery Schools [[Link](#)]

- Support families' financial well-being through employment training, home ownership classes, and financial literacy.

## 2.7 Prioritize Services for those Most in Need

### Recommendation Area 3: Stop the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Behavior interventions and expulsions of preschool children as young as three and four years old can be precursors to longer term engagement with law enforcement.<sup>77</sup> Historically, systemic racism in education systems has resulted in disparities in how children are disciplined.<sup>78</sup> Along with punitive school expulsions and referrals, gun violence involvement also results in young people coming into contact with law enforcement and the legal system. King County had been experiencing an increase in youth and community-based gun violence and homicide over several years, with a significant rise since the beginning of 2020. Data highlights that youth gun violence more critically affects marginalized communities and that racial inequities within systems must be addressed to improve outcomes for youth and young adults.<sup>79, 80</sup> King County's ability to provide a continuum of care, from prevention to intervention and restoration, is essential to actively interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline and preventing gun violence.

To disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and prevent gun violence, the CYAB recommends that King County:

**A. Improve partnerships with schools and school districts to implement alternative disciplines like restorative justice practices within schools and minimize referrals and contact with the criminal legal system.<sup>81</sup>**

- Deepen partnerships and collaborations with community-based organizations, schools, and school districts to provide on campus violence prevention services for students and staff.
- Integrate Community Violence Intervention (CVI) strategies into school safety plans.
- Increase support to students disproportionately impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, i.e., Black, brown, neurodivergent youth, and youth who identify as LGBTQIA+.
- Support school administration, leadership, and teachers with professional development trainings regarding restorative justice practices, relationship building, alternative discipline, and de-escalation strategies.

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<sup>77</sup> Standing Together Against Suspension and Expulsion in Early Childhood, NAEYC [\[Link\]](#)

<sup>78</sup> PNAS, Racial disparities in school-based disciplinary actions are associated with county-level rates of racial bias. [\[Link\]](#)

<sup>79</sup> See 2020 King County Firearm Violence: Year End Report [\[Link\]](#)

<sup>80</sup> See 2021 King County Firearm Violence: Year End Report [\[Link\]](#)

<sup>81</sup> The use of *criminal legal system* and *juvenile legal* system in place of *justice* system is intentional. The United States legal system has egregiously underserved Black people, people of lower-socio-economic status, and those experiencing poverty. With continued issues of bias and anti-Blackness in arrests, sentencing, fees and fines, *justice* is not the overwhelming experience of those impacted by the United States legal system. Likewise, the disproportionate numbers of Black and brown youth negatively impacted by our judicial systems also suggest that criminal legal more accurately describes the realities of those experiencing the system. "Why We Say "Criminal Legal" System not "Criminal Justice" System [\[Link\]](#)

- Contract agencies and organizations to provide socio-emotional learning and conflict resolution for students who are most vulnerable to experiencing the juvenile legal system.

**B. Prioritize and increase funding for gun violence prevention and community-led safety.**

- Prioritize the voices and experiences of youth, young adults, and families most impacted by gun violence in King County.
- Commit to a long-term regional plan that aligns, coordinates, and strengthens a collaborative public health approach to prevent and eliminate youth gun violence, ensuring sustainable conditions where young people can be healthy, hopeful, safe, and thriving.
- Formalize the Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention's role in coordinating King County's response to youth, young adults, and community gun violence.
- Expand Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs like the Regional Peacekeepers Collective (RPKC) Initiative for youth and young adults in King County by geography, and/or cultural/ethnic group to ensure tailored, relevant and timely services to those at greatest risk for being impacted by gun violence.
- Improve referral pathways for youth and young adults at the highest risk for gun violence to CVI programming. Schools, community members, law enforcement, criminal justice partners, and courts should work together to create a more coordinated support system.
- Continue to support the Hospital-based & Community-Linked Intervention Program that provides comprehensive bedside support and community-based follow up services to gunshot victims and their families.<sup>82</sup>
- Expand distribution of firearm safe storage equipment and public education to promote the reduction of children, youth and young adults' access to firearms.

**C. Explore and expand community-based alternatives to secure youth detention.**

- Explore short-term, respite housing for minors who cannot go home due to safety concerns after an arrest.
- Provide enhanced immediate services when youth return home to their families or are placed in kinship care with extended family members.
- Create, contract, and provide oversight to a network of community care homes where youth would stay while their court case proceeds if they are unable to go home because of safety concerns.
- Ensure all legal system-involved youth have access to, and can benefit from, culturally responsive and linguistically relevant, developmentally appropriate, youth- and family-centered services that address their identified needs.
- Continue the ongoing engagement with the Advisory Committee held by the Executive's Office currently and in the future, comprised of most impacted communities and populations, to approve and hold the County accountable for progress.

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<sup>82</sup> This differentiation provides young adults with a distinct option within the County's criminal legal system as brain development is not complete until the mid to late twenties. Young people ages 18-24 are at high risk for repeat offences and poor outcomes when placed in the general adult population and they need different support interventions. A Public Health Approach to Gun Violence: King County Office of Gun Violence Prevention [\[LINK\]](#)

**D. Provide distinct services to young adults ages 18-24 in the County’s adult criminal legal system.**

- Mirror the state’s Juvenile Rehabilitation to Age 25 legislation that passed in 2018.<sup>83</sup>
- Ensure that young adults and minors have separate spaces and distinct sets of services during detention.

**E. Invest in workforce development and paid training opportunities for legal system-involved and vulnerable young people.**

- Support young people, including those under the legal working age, to gain training, apprenticeships, and internship opportunities with community organizations and within King County.
- Initiate new projects with workforce development dollars and leverage existing area programs to expand opportunities available to legal system-involved and vulnerable young people.

**Recommendation Area 4: Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration and Collective Impact<sup>84</sup>**

The recommendations below recognize that while King County government is one player among many, and not responsible for some systems involving children and youth, it is uniquely positioned to use its regional role and act as a collaborator and convenor. In doing so, King County can advance collective impact efforts to help achieve population and systems-level change to the benefit of all young people and families in the region.<sup>85</sup>

To ensure that King County helps drive cross-sector collaboration and collective impact for the well-being of children, youth and families, the CYAB recommends that King County:

**A. Invest in strengthening existing and emerging local cross-sector collaboratives, conveners, and collective impact leaders to build capacity for regional efforts towards systems change.**

- Support entities outside of government, also known as backbone organizations, to provide connective tissue for collaborative processes, and identification of needs and solutions.<sup>86</sup>
- Focus on strengthening local backbone leaders to gain competencies to lead, build capacity, and sustain cross-sector collaboration and regional efforts towards systems goals.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) to Age 25 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>84</sup> Formerly Bust Siloes/We’re Better Together in the original King County Youth Action Plan (2015). [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>85</sup> What is Collective Impact [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>86</sup> In 2025, entities such as Eastside Pathways, the Play Equity Coalition, the Racial Equity Coalition, Greater Seattle Business of Child Care, King County Service Providers Network, and other place-based and issue-based groups are providing essential collaborative and cross-sector support for issues impacting children, youth, and families.

<sup>87</sup> Backbone organizations support place-based collaborative action initiatives, bringing together the people, organizations, and sectors needed to improve the lived experiences and outcomes of young people and families; and enhance government efforts at system change. See Building Strong Sustainable Backbone Leadership for a list of recommended competencies. [\[LINK\]](#)

**B. Build clear mechanisms and strategies such as braided funding and aligned data to collaborate and coordinate within and across King County departments, and with local cities and Washington State departments serving children, youth, and families.**

- Continue to coordinate within King County using the collective impact model and centering equity across departments as relevant.
- Build clear mechanisms of collaboration and connection with Washington State departments serving children, youth and families including the Office for the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Washington’s Department of Youth and Families (DCYF) and Office for Homeless Youth (OHY) in the Department of Commerce.
- Consider developing a “Children’s Cabinet” of elected and appointed leaders across local jurisdictions in the county, including King County, to ensure accountability and to better coordinate services and to collaboratively work towards the well-being of young people.<sup>88</sup>

**C. Engage with philanthropy and other private sector partners to ensure the wealth of our region supports eliminating inequities and promotes thriving communities for children, youth, and families.**

- Prioritize collaborating with private philanthropy, corporations, and corporate philanthropy to complement County investments, learning agendas, and understanding of current needs and priorities.

**D. Support an integrated referral system and resource database across the network of community service providers to have one place where young people, and those that support them, can learn about, and get connected to, programming.**

- Explore related navigation and case management services to ensure a human connection between the young person and needed programs or interventions.
- Build on existing systems and infrastructure that have been created over the past 10 years including Elevate Washington, Allies in Healthier Systems for Health and Abundance in Youth’s (AHSAY) landscape scan, 211 Crisis Connections, Help Me Grow, the DCHS Resource Navigation Team, and other resources.<sup>89, 90, 91, 92</sup>

**Recommendation Area 5: Be Data Informed and Data Inclusive<sup>93</sup>**

Best Starts is a major driver of King County’s practices for identifying, collecting, analyzing, and using data to inform strategies that support the health and well-being of young people and families. King County evaluators and scientists in DCHS and Public Health collaborate with funded community organizations to develop strategy- and program-specific evaluation plans.<sup>94, 95</sup> The County’s data collection practices prioritize culturally relevant measurement tools, incorporate both quantitative and

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<sup>88</sup> Continuity Through Crisis: How Cabinets Meet the Needs of Young People During a Pandemic [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>89</sup> Elevate Washington [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>90</sup> AHSAY Community Resource Landscaping [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>91</sup> King County 211, Crisis Connections [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>92</sup> Help Me Grow, Washington [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>93</sup> Formerly Get Data Smart in the original King County Youth Action Plan (2015). [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>94</sup> See DCHS Performance Measurement and Evaluation (PME) Unit [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>95</sup> See Public Health Seattle & King County Assessment, Policy Development, and Evaluation Unit (APDE) [\[LINK\]](#)

qualitative data, and ensure data is shared back with the community for context and reflection.<sup>96, 97, 98</sup> As King County and partners continue to strive for aligned, measurable outcomes, the need for standardization should be balanced with flexibility and responsiveness to community priorities and concerns, including data protection.

To continue this progress, and to ensure equitable data and evaluation practices are used to inform decision-making, the CYAB recommends that King County:

**A. Center and reflect communities in data, including youth and family voice, prioritizing community-based partnerships, and relationships with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and organizations.**

- Align with the 2024 update to the Public Health Seattle and King County Strategic Plan which prioritizes community-based partnerships and relationships with BIPOC communities and organizations.<sup>99</sup>
- Use tools and best practices from data decolonization experts so that, to the greatest extent possible, the community (focused program population) determines what and how data is collected, the interpretation, and the decisions made based on the data.<sup>100</sup>
- Disaggregate data and do intersectional analyses to make groups and significant differences visible; highlight group strengths in addition to disparities.
- Prioritize mixed-method evaluation approaches, like qualitative data that provide inclusive information, to understand the full story and support strengths-based perspectives as opposed to deficit-based perspectives.
- Center youth and family voice, through:
  - Compensating community members for their time and expertise.
  - Youth-led or community-led learning and feedback cycles.
  - Inclusive practices for analyzing data, such as community cafes.
  - Consulting youth-led or community-led advisory boards, including King County's CYAB.
  - Improving language access, including multilingual and multicultural data collection and presentation.
  - Honoring information about someone's lived experience as data.

**B. Dedicate the resources needed to continue building capacity within the County and in communities and organizations to collect, use, and improve data practices.**

- Adequately fund provider/partner data collection and collaboration, capacity-building, routines for learning, and County-provided evaluative and engagement supports.
- Maintain and grow data infrastructure to streamline collection, analysis, and sharing of information, including improved infrastructure and tools for qualitative data, and using video reporting or other tools that support accessibility.

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<sup>96</sup> Best Starts for Kids Health Survey [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>97</sup> Best Starts for Kids Dashboard, Indicators, and Annual Reports [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>98</sup> Best Starts Community Conversations [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>99</sup> See Public Health – Seattle & King County 2024-2029 Strategic Plan [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>100</sup> Decolonization is defined as the active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power that originate from a colonized nation's own indigenous culture. Racial Equity Tools Glossary, Equity in the Center [\[LINK\]](#)

- Provide capacity building support to partners to invest in data systems, analysis capacity, and use of data in learning cycles.
- Support reflective practice and equitable professional development for evaluation staff to continue to build skills.
- Continually examine data collection expectations across required reporting to determine which efforts are meaningful and useful and which could be eliminated.

**C. Build and sustain a culture of learning and accountability by promoting co-designed continuous improvement practices that mitigate harm and bias in interpretation and reporting.**

- Model a strong, internal learning culture by highlighting and sharing successful, co-designed continuous improvement practices across program and evaluation teams.
- Continue to refine and improve how the County analyzes and learns from population-level data, disaggregated by key components of identity, to:
  - Understand youth, family, and community health and well-being.
  - Inform the need for investment, promotion, and intervention work.
- Whenever possible, publicly share program and population data alongside strategy and historical context to minimize harm or biased interpretations.

**D. Improve cross-system data coordination and learning within King County and with municipal and other partners.**

- Develop and use aligned high-level outcomes and indicators to ease burden on community-based organizations, when possible.
- Strengthen cross-agency partnerships use of inclusive, youth-centered data for learning, goal setting, and continuous improvement.
- Leverage platforms like Communities Count that have flexible, adaptable interfaces.
- Communicate about integrated data systems and mitigating harm.<sup>101</sup>
- Be transparent about data privacy and protection practices.
- Establish connections and regular cross-sector convenings across nonprofits, funders, county, city, and state-wide agencies to build common understanding of needs and outcomes.

**Recommendation Area 6: Invest Early, Invest Often, Invest in Community-Informed Outcomes<sup>102</sup>**

King County has a unique role in our region's youth serving system, as both a funder and provider of services. As a funder, Best Starts and PSTAA funds have bolstered King County's ability to invest early, often, and in outcomes. In partnership with community-based organizations, King County serves the who life span of young people, from prenatal to age 24. The early interventions support children and families who need additional resources to succeed, and progress is sustained through investments dedicated to school-aged youth throughout their journey to adulthood. County general funds also ensure access to a network of youth and family services; transportation for youth involved in the juvenile legal system to attend mandatory meetings and services; and community-based diversion

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<sup>101</sup> Communities Count [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>102</sup> Formerly Invest Early, Invest Often, Invest in Outcomes in the original King County Youth Action Plan (2015). [\[LINK\]](#)

programming for youth referred by the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.<sup>103</sup> As a provider, the County partners with local colleges to re-engage youth and young adults in programming for secondary and post-secondary education completion, job readiness training, and access to internships and employment.<sup>104</sup>

Through these investments, King County and community partners implement strategies that lead to a dynamic set of outcomes among young people. These include changes and an increase in knowledge of parenting and child development, positive birth outcomes, social connection and healthy relationships, education and employment attainments, and positive identity development. The Best Starts Dashboard illustrates the dynamic outcomes reported by community partners.<sup>105</sup>

Additionally, the graphic in Appendix D illustrates the theoretical model tying an increase in promotive and protective factors and decrease in risk factors to a dynamic set of outcomes for the health and well-being of young people.

To ensure that the County continues to invest early, often, and in community-informed outcomes, the CYAB recommends that King County:

**A. Continue to invest in promotion, prevention, and early intervention activities supporting child and youth development from prenatal to age 24.**

- Ensure continued funding for strategies that address a range of essential services and programs for well-being across the whole lifespan of young people, like those in the Best Starts and PSTAA implementation plans.<sup>106, 107</sup>
- Invest early and towards positive outcomes to help prevent more expensive interventions later in life.

**B. Continue to invest in local youth- and community-based solutions that are culturally relevant and reflective of the communities' identified needs.**

- Ensure community-based solutions are funded. Listen to communities who know their needs and solutions best.
- Invest directly in youth-led efforts and solutions, while ensuring adequate support for financial management and implementation (i.e. young people are paid on time, and tax implications are understood, etc.).

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<sup>103</sup> Restorative Community Pathways [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>104</sup> DCHS partners with colleges and high schools to provide re-engagement services at YouthSource in Tukwila and Renton Technical College, Center for Education and Career Opportunities at Shoreline Community College, Learning Center Seattle at Seattle Central College, Bellevue College, Federal Way Open Doors at Truman High School, and Innovation Academy in Highline School District, and Youth Care. See DCHS Youth Education and Employment [\[LINK\]](#) and map of re-engagements sites. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>105</sup> Best Starts Dashboards and Annual Reports [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>106</sup> Best Starts for Kids Initiative 2016-2021 and 2022-2027 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>107</sup> Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA) [\[LINK\]](#)

**C. Invest in outcomes that are linked to community learning and informed by research.**

- Learn from participating youth and families about how funding is supporting thriving outcomes.
- Develop a research agenda to ensure the County is at the forefront of capturing and sharing learnings about the results of using a thriving youth outcome framework.

**D. Work across County agencies and departments and with external partners such as local jurisdictions and service providers to identify gaps in funding by geography, and issue area, and work to resource underinvested areas.**

- Collect budget data on a regular basis to understand where funding is and is not available.

**Recommendation Area 7: Implementation, Accountability, and Evaluation<sup>108</sup>**

The County should ensure that it has the funding and structures to implement the 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendations, be held accountable to the recommendations, and effectively collect data and evaluate the impact on young people and families.

To ensure implementation, accountability, and evaluation of the 2025 Youth Action Plan, the CYAB recommends that King County:

**A. Ensure the CYAB and the County maintain shared accountability for the implementation of the Youth Action Plan recommendations, including reviews every five years.**

- Ensure the CYAB continues to be a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas in response to emergent needs, promising practices, and continuous improvement related to the Youth Action Plan.
- Initiate a review and report of the Youth Action Plan's implementation of the proposed recommendations every five years. The report will be co-created to include feedback from youth, community, and relevant system partners, assessing the progress on implementation of the recommendations and other deliverables.

**B. Set forth plans to create a King County Youth Commission.**

As recommended in the Youth Bill of Rights Report, King County should establish a Youth Commission to give thoughts, opinions and action to policies and budgetary decisions. To operationalize the Youth Commission, King County should:

- Make available a minimum of 1 FTE to plan and staff the Commission.
- Draft the Bylaws to govern the operations of the Youth Commission, such as:
  - Number of members from each council district.
  - Number of at-large members.
  - Compensation for Commission members.
  - Role and scope of work.
  - Introduce legislation that determines the Youth Commission as the official youth policy body for King County.

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<sup>108</sup> Formerly Accountability in the original King County Youth Action Plan (2015). [\[LINK\]](#)

- C. Ensure the Children, Youth, and Young Adult Division Director, and their designee(s), continues to liaise between the CYAB, the King County Executive and King County Council on the implementation of the Youth Action Plan recommendations and County investments and initiatives related to children, youth, and families.**
- Continue to assist with the comprehensive review and analysis of King County's programs, services, and outcomes for children and families and youth and young adults for alignment with other initiatives that have outcomes identified for children, families, youth, and young adults.
  - Continue to recommend policy, budget, and other findings to the King County Executive and Council, ensuring alignment with other initiatives that have outcomes identified for children, families, youth, and young adults.
- D. In the event there are significant changes in the County's capacity to invest in children, youth, and families through levies or other funding streams, the Youth Action Plan will be reviewed for policy alignment and prioritization.**

#### **Recommendation Area 8: Youth Bill of Rights**

In January 2025, King County Council passed Motion 16722 adopting the Youth Bill of Rights, almost ten years after adopting the original King County Youth Action Plan.<sup>109</sup> The King County Youth Bill of Rights keeps the needs of children and youth at the forefront when making policy and budgetary decisions. Fulfillment of Recommendation Area 8 on a Youth Bill of Rights marks an important achievement in that youth have affirmed their most pressing wants and needs, and King County leaders have acknowledged these by adopting the Bill of Rights, as follows:

##### **KING COUNTY YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS (2025)**

*We, the children and youth of King County, Washington, as contributors to an inclusive and just human society, and to secure hope and a future based in equity, respect, and combined power for all, establish these youth bill of rights.*

- I. **BASIC NEEDS & WELL-BEING** – We the children and youth of King County, assert that every young individual has the right to the fulfillment of basic human needs.
  - A. Every young individual has access to fresh, nutritious, and affordable food.
  - B. Every young individual is housed in a safe home environment, and able to live without risk of harm or unwilling displacement.
  - C. Every young individual experiences sustainable living including access to outdoor spaces and unpolluted air.
  - D. Every young individual has access to clean drinking water.
- II. **HEALTH** – We the children and youth of King County declare the care of young peoples' mental, emotional, and physical health is a fundamental human right.

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<sup>109</sup> Motion 16722 [\[LINK\]](#)

- A. Every young individual has access to mental health support, mental health resources, and mental health services that are affordable, responsive, and address their unique challenges.
  - B. Every young individual has respect, autonomy, and meaningful involvement in decisions about their body.
  - C. Every young individual has resources, services, and aid to combat drug and alcohol abuse.
  - D. Every young individual has affordable and easily accessible health care.
  - E. Every young individual has the power to make decisions about their reproductive health.
- III. **EDUCATION & LEARNING** – We the children and youth of King County uphold education as a pathway to progress, economic stability, and development.
- A. Every young individual receives a quality education in a supportive learning environment where they feel emotionally, mentally, and physically able.
  - B. Every young individual receives unbiased education that expands their knowledge, trade, and skills, and that addresses individual learning needs.
  - C. Every young individual is supported by their community in building their educational goals.
  - D. Every young individual receives training that prepares them for the next stages of life.
- IV. **EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE** – We the children and youth of King County believe that equity and social justice are essential for a better world, and by upholding these rights, we create a brighter future for all.
- A. Every young individual who experiences any form of discrimination is validated and taken seriously.
  - B. Every young individual has resources that address language barriers, and/or situations that limit their ability to communicate or understand circumstances.
- V. **SAFETY & SECURITY** – We the children and youth of King County assert that all young people should feel safe and protected at home, at school, and in their communities.
- A. Every young individual has safe communities that are free from violence.
  - B. Every young individual has a learning environment that is physically and emotionally safe, free from violence, judgement, and inequity.
  - C. Every young individual has safe spaces shielded from gun violence and resources if they are impacted by gun violence.
  - D. Every young individual safely travels routes, roads, and sidewalks within their communities.
- VI. **COMMUNITY & BELONGING** – We the children and youth of King County champion the importance of a sense of community and belonging, and creating nurturing spaces for connection, contribution, and collaboration.
- A. Every young individual has community supports and uplifting environments to rely on in times of need.

- B. Every young individual is surrounded by supportive communities and systems that protect and sustain their identities.
  - C. Every young individual has spaces where they safely gather, celebrate, and collaborate with other youth.
  - D. Every young individual is protected from bullying in any form and feels safe and heard when bullying is reported.
- VII. **ENVIRONMENT** – We the children and youth of King County recognize the urgent need to protect our planet for future generations.
- A. Every young individual engages in solutions to climate change and global warming.
  - B. Every young individual enjoys the natural environment and keeps it preserved for future generations.
  - C. Every young individual breathes clear air void of carbon emissions and pollution.
  - D. Every young individual enjoys clean streets, sidewalks, and highways free of garbage and dangerous waste.
- VIII. **TRANSPORTATION** – We the children and youth of King County maintain that public and private transportation is necessary for young people to attend school, build community, and explore the world around them.
- A. Every young individual has adequate access to affordable public transportation.
  - B. Every young individual walks well-maintained and accessible sidewalks.
  - C. Every young individual has options for an affordable personal mode of transportation and able to travel when and where they need to in a timely manner.
- IX. **YOUTH VOICE** – We the children and youth of King County uphold the right of youth to actively participate in civic life and contribute to decision-making processes that shape their future and present communities.
- A. Every young individual expresses themselves, voices their opinions, beliefs, and concerns without fear of censorship or repression.
  - B. Every young individual has a voice in local government, boards, and commissions.
  - C. Every young individual shares their thoughts and concerns about their school or learning environment and is heard.
- X. **RECREATION & SPORTS** – We the children and youth of King County acknowledge the role recreation and sports play in the development of young people, having a positive impact on individual growth, community growth, and self-esteem.
- A. Every young individual engages with the natural environment.
  - B. Every young individual has equitable access to various affordable recreational activities and sports.

Per the Youth Bill of Rights report, the CYAB finds that King County should:<sup>110</sup>

**A. Utilize the King County Youth Bill of Rights as a formal guide when considering policies and budgetary decisions that impact children and youth.**

- Take steps to ensure the YBOR articles inform decisions made by King County Council that impact young people.

**B. Update the Youth Bill of Rights every five years.**

- Update the Youth Bill of Rights every five years to ensure that it is reflective of current needs and issues confronting youth in a rapidly changing environment. Youth needs are constantly changing due to sociological events like COVID-19 pandemic, updates in technology, and the impacts of political and economic changes.
- Ensure the Youth Bill of Rights is a living document with room for interpretation and negotiation over time, as new issues and opportunities emerge, and as priorities shift and strategies are reassessed.

**Recommendation Area 9: Strengthen the Community-Based Organization Ecosystem<sup>111</sup>**

While King County has introduced efforts to support and strengthen the nonprofit sector, community organizations continue to experience challenges with organizational sustainability, staff and talent retention, and resources to provide career pathways within the nonprofit sector that offer livable, thriving wages.<sup>112</sup> In 2023, a study from the University of Washington School of Social Work estimated that human services workers in Washington state make at least 30 percent less than workers in other industries. For human services workers employed by nonprofit organizations, the gap is 37 percent.<sup>113</sup> New organizations continue to require capacity and organizational infrastructure development to manage County funds, and scale successful programs. For nonprofit leaders facing burnout, sabbaticals, such as those offered by the BIPOC ED Coalition, are increasingly being seen as a helpful tool to support longevity in the nonprofit sector.<sup>114</sup>

To strengthen the ecosystem of organizations providing services to young people in King County, the CYAB recommends King County:

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<sup>110</sup> King County Youth Bill of Rights [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>111</sup> This is a new Recommendation Area 9, replacing the original Youth Action Plan recommendation 9: Evaluation and Reporting/Implementation and Timeline, which was combined with Recommendation 7.

<sup>112</sup> Through Best Starts investments, King County has supported technical assistance and capacity building of contracted community organizations, made efforts to fund the full cost of services, and planned for inflation of 3 percent when contracting. See Best Starts Implementation Plan [\[LINK\]](#). The King County Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy partnered with 501 Commons to launch the “Putting People First” project in 2021, including a Wage & Benefits Survey, which gathered data on salaries and benefits in the nonprofit field to help organizations evaluate their own compensation and benefits practices and guide these policies moving forward

<sup>113</sup> School of Social Work study confirms human services workers are underpaid [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>114</sup> BIPOC ED Coalition [\[LINK\]](#)

- A. Increase the ease of access for community-based organizations to apply for and receive funding across all King County Departments.**
  - Provide low barrier application assistance for organizations seeking funding across all King County departments.
  - Simplify application processes, aligning RFP questions, budgets, and narratives wherever possible. Accept common application materials to ease the application burden on CBOs.
  - Provide language access throughout application and procurement processes.
- B. Recognize the full cost of providing services in terms of contracts, including wages and benefits, and annual increases keeping up with inflation.**
  - Implement a County-wide Inflation Policy on all contracts and services to provide annual increases.
  - Initiate actions that recognize and account for the fact that nonprofit salaries and benefits are below pay for comparable work offered by related fields like government, philanthropy, health care, and education.
  - Be transparent in recognizing the full cost of services, as opposed to the “market rate” for child care, or the subsidized rate for many youth programs.
- C. Fund multi-year and general operating support grants and contracts wherever possible.**
  - Make multiyear (three to five year) grants and contracts to allow for consistency year-over-year for providers and those they serve, and support organizational sustainability.
- D. Provide low barrier capacity building support across all King County departments funding community-based organizations and nonprofits.**
  - Support CBOs to access capacity building services that simultaneously honor CBOs’ foundational strengths and support sustainability long after King County’s program funding may end.
- E. Support the ecosystem of children and youth serving organizations through resource coordination and entities like intermediaries and coalitions that have expertise and community trust.**
  - Partner with and support intermediaries and coalitions focused on knowledge building, connectivity across organizations, and advocacy to address sector-wide issues and needs.
  - Fund small CBOs directly, when possible, but explore resource coordination or pass through funding via intermediaries when relationships and effective programing already exist within a specific issue area.
  - Continue efforts to collect and analyze data on needs and access to inform funding strategies and sustain an equitable ecosystem of human services centering young people prenatal to age 24.
- F. Partner with, and learn from, local and national philanthropic partners and other public funders to ensure sector strength and sustainability.**
  - Learn from and partner with philanthropic organizations and foundations that address sector-wide needs and implementing liberatory funding processes and programs.
  - Build a regularly updated regional budget of funding for children, youth, and families to better understand the issues, geographies and ages currently supported, and where gaps in the full ecosystem exist.

## VII. Conclusion

Since the original Youth Action Plan was first adopted 10 years ago, King County has made significant strides in how, and how much, it invests in health and well-being of young people. The voter approved Best Starts levy has enabled King County to transform its approach to be more inclusive across age groups, prenatal to age 24, and across strategies to include upstream promotion and prevention programming. This has likely helped King County's children and families withstand some of the worst impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping the focus on upstream promotion and prevention will be critical to sustaining the progress made thus far. Informed by King County's youth, the 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendations serve as a guide to see every baby born and child raised in King County reach adulthood happy, healthy, safe, and thriving.

## VIII. Appendices

### Appendix A: Assessing Well-Being: How Children and Youth are Faring in King County

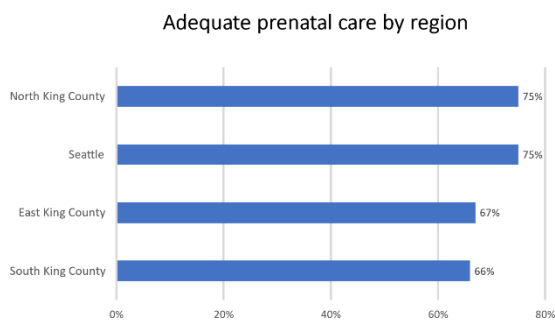
While the County’s ability to evaluate funded programs and to understand participant and population outcomes has significantly increased through infrastructure investments, disruptions caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic reverberate throughout child care, K12, postsecondary, youth development, basic needs, behavioral health sectors.<sup>115</sup> The following section reviews population data where possible to draw comparisons and discuss longitudinal trends in how children and youth are faring in King County. Note that these outcomes data are one narrow view of a multi-dimensional experience shaped by policy, resources, mobility, and cross-sector coordination.

The youth population in King County has increased by nearly 100,000 over the last 13 years with 631,735 0- to 14-year-olds in the County in 2023.<sup>116</sup>

#### **Adverse birth outcomes remain stable over time, though disparities persist in outcomes and prenatal care.**

Two-thirds (68 percent) of King County’s pregnant parents received early and adequate prenatal care by the fourth month and attended 80 percent or more of their prenatal visits in 2020-2022.<sup>117</sup> The overall percentage declined prior to the pandemic (72 percent in 2017-2019). As shown in Table 2, the percentage with prenatal care is higher than the average in Seattle (75 percent) or North King County (75 percent) while lower than average in South (67 percent) and East King County (66 percent). Birthing people identifying as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and age 24 years of age or younger had the lowest percentage with prenatal care.

Table 2: Adequate Prenatal Care by Region



<sup>115</sup>In their Own Words: Young People in King County Describe the Impact of COVID-19, 2020 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>116</sup>American Community Survey data from 2023 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>117</sup>Washington State Vital Statistics (Births): Data dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “early and adequate prenatal care” from the dropdown on “choose another birth indicator.” [\[LINK\]](#)

Data shows racial disparities in birth outcomes persisted though no significant changes occurred in infant deaths over time. Infants born to Black birthing people (8.5 per 1,000) died at a rate twice that of the King County average and more than 2.5 times higher than the rate for infants born to Asian or white birthing people.<sup>118</sup> Infants born to birthing people living in the South Region (5 per 1,000) died at a higher rate than the King County average (4.0 per 1,000) and more than 1.5 times that of babies born in the North and East Regions (2.5 and 2.6 per 1,000).

Less than ten percent of infants born to birthing people were preterm in 2020-2022 (9.6 percent), and this rate rose 0.2 percent since prior to the pandemic.<sup>119</sup> The preterm birth rate among Black, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic and multiple races birthing people was higher than that of Asian and White birthing people.

Most (83 percent) singleton babies born had a healthy birthweight, and this percentage has remained stable over time.<sup>120</sup> The percentage of birthing people identifying as Black (80 percent), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (80 percent), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (77 percent) with a healthy birthweight was lower than the percentage of other races and ethnicities (White, Hispanic, Asian, and multiple races identified).

Among King County children who attended child care, 73.4 percent were in care that was affordable.

A lack of access to high-quality child care has become a significant crisis affecting not only King County children and families but also its employers and economy.<sup>121</sup> In the past several decades supply failed to meet demand, and growth in the cost of care has surpassed the rate of inflation.<sup>122</sup> There are 20 percent fewer family child care providers now than there were five years ago. While the capacity of child care centers has grown slightly, it pales in comparison to the population growth of children in need of care. As cited in the Washington State Child Care Collaborative Task Force's 2019 report, since 2014 the state gained 3,000 child care slots, but the population of children under age 6 grew by nearly 30,000.<sup>123</sup>

One-fourth of King County families responding to the Best Starts survey reported challenges finding child care that met their needs (27 percent for 2020-2023).<sup>124</sup> A higher percentage of Seattle residents (37 percent) reported challenges than did South (20 percent) and East King County (23 percent) residents. Most respondents to the survey however, reported adequate staffing in child care situations (92 percent), child care staff cared for child health needs (95 percent), and child care arrangements offered children opportunities to build skills (90 percent). Three-fourths (74 percent) reported that children were in affordable child care arrangements.

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<sup>118</sup> Washington State Vital Statistics (Births): Data dashboard. Navigate to "More from this Data Source," select "infant mortality" from the dropdown on "choose another birth indicator." [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>119</sup> Washington State Vital Statistics (Births): Data dashboard. Navigate to "More from this Data Source," select "Preterm birth rate" from the dropdown on "choose another birth indicator." [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>120</sup> Washington State Vital Statistics (Births): Data dashboard. Navigate to "More from this Data Source," select "healthy birth rate" from the dropdown on "choose another birth indicator." [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>121</sup> Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan 2022-2026, page 41 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>122</sup> Child Care Aware of America (2019). The US and the High Price of Child Care [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>123</sup> Washington State Office of Financial Management (2019). *Estimates of April 1 Population by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, State Data Tables 2010-2018*. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>124</sup> Best Starts for Kids Health Survey Data [\[LINK\]](#)

Child care helps ensure job stability for Washington parents and may enable them to seek additional education or training associated with higher lifetime earnings and overall family success.<sup>125</sup> Families able to access care also benefit from high-quality early learning, which is critical as a child’s brain develops more from birth to five than during the remainder of school years.<sup>126</sup>

**King County’s on-time graduation rate increased over time, though disparities persist by race and place.**

Academic progress among King County youth improved since the adoption of the Youth Action Plan in 2015. The County’s on-time high school graduation rate is 87 percent for 2021-2022, an increase of 7 percent since 2015.<sup>127</sup> The on-time graduation rate increased from 50 percent to 60 percent among students experiencing homelessness over the same decade. The percentage who graduated on time was lower, however, for children identifying as Transgender (41 percent in 2021-22), migrant (65 percent), homeless (60 percent), and receiving free lunch (79 percent). Disparities persist by race and region. Asian (93.1 percent) and White (89.9 percent) students were more likely than average to graduate on time, while American Indian/Alaska Native (68.2 percent), Black (83.3 percent), Hispanic (77.0 percent), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (78.0 percent) students were less likely to graduate on time than the King County average (87.1 percent). Female students in King County had an on-time graduation rate of 89.3 percent in 2022, higher than the rate for male students (85.8 percent).

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The County’s on-time high school graduation rate is 87% for 2021-2022, an increase of 7% since 2015.

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**The prevalence of exclusionary discipline is lower than pre-pandemic levels overall, and disparities persist by student race, gender, and housing status.**

As research shows, students of color continue to experience more frequent and more severe discipline compared with their White peers.<sup>128</sup> Suspension and expulsion from the school day, also called “exclusionary discipline,” result in a loss of learning time for excluded students.<sup>129</sup> The percentage of students receiving a school suspension or expulsion fell during the pandemic from 23 percent to 1 percent in 2021-2022.<sup>130</sup> Students who have been suspended or expelled are more likely to fail courses, drop out of high school, and become involved in the juvenile legal system, any of which can limit future educational and employment opportunities.<sup>131</sup> Black and American Indian/Alaska Native students were nearly three times as likely as students in the county overall to receive exclusionary discipline while

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<sup>125</sup> Washington State Department of Commerce (2019). *The Mounting Costs of Child Care*. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>126</sup> Washington State Office of Financial Management (2019). *Estimates of April 1 Population by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, State Data Tables 2010-2018*. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>127</sup> Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>128</sup> Jessika H. Bottiani, J., Bradshaw, C. and Mendelson, T. (2015). A Multilevel Examination of Racial Disparities in High School Discipline [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>129</sup> Del Toro, J and Wang, M. (2021). The Roles of Suspensions for Minor Infractions and School Climate in Predicting Academic Performance Among Adolescents [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>130</sup> Communities Count – School Suspension and Expulsion [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>131</sup> Anderson, K. and Ritter, G. (2017). Disparate Use of Exclusionary Discipline: Evidence on Inequities in School Discipline from a U.S. State [\[LINK\]](#)

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students were twice as likely.<sup>132</sup> Students experiencing homelessness were suspended or expelled three times more than the county overall, while students receiving special education services were suspended or expelled twice as much as the County overall. Students who were eligible for free- and reduced-price meals were also more likely to have experienced exclusionary discipline, and males had nearly twice the rate of exclusionary discipline than did females.

A higher percentage of students report good grades in school, though disparities persist by race, place, gender, and sexual orientation.

Most King County students in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades (84 percent) report getting mostly A and B grades (good grades).<sup>133</sup> The percentage of students in these grades identifying as Black (76 percent), Hispanic (71 percent), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (65 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Native students (72 percent) reporting good grades was lower than the King County average. A lower percentage of South King County students in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades reported good grades compared to other regions (77 percent and 88-89 percent respectively). Similarly, a lower percentage of Transgender students reported good grades compared to questioning and students with other gender identities (75 percent and 81-86 percent respectively). Disparities by sexual orientation were less pronounced; 82 percent of LGB+<sup>134</sup> in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reported good grades compared to 85 percent of heterosexual and 87 percent of not sure students.

The percentage of high school students reporting feeling safe at school remained relatively stable, though Transgender students were less likely to report feeling safe.

The percentage of King County 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting they feel safe in school (84 percent) remained relatively stable over time.<sup>135</sup> The percentage of Seattle students in these grades who felt safe at school, however, decreased by 6 percent points from 2021 to 2023 to 81 percent with no corresponding change in other regions. A lower percentage of Black (78 percent) and Hispanic (79 percent) students felt unsafe at school compared to the King County average. The percentage of LGB+ and not sure 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students that felt safe at school was lower than that of heterosexual students (76-80 percent vs. 87 percent respectively). Similarly, Transgender (70 percent) and questioning (69 percent) students were less likely to report feeling safe than were male (82 percent) and female (87 percent) students.

The prevalence of depression among high schoolers declined to one in four since 2021.

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<sup>132</sup> Start with Us: Unpacking Bias in School Discipline, The Road Map Project, 2017 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>133</sup> Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Good grades in school” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.” [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>134</sup> The acronym LGB+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, plus) is used in the Healthy Youth Survey and data reported in this section. The acronym LGBTQIA+ is an acronym often used as an umbrella term referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex individuals. The “+” stands for “plus,” which recognizes additional sexual orientations and gender identities that are not explicitly identified in the acronym. LGBTQIA+ is used throughout the rest of the Youth Action Plan.

<sup>160</sup> Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Feel safe at school” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.”

The prevalence of depression among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in King County increased during the pandemic but decreased from 2021 to 2023 by one-third to 25 percent.<sup>136</sup> The percentage of students reporting that in the last 12 months they felt so sad and hopeless for two or more weeks that they stopped doing usual activities, how depression is defined, was highest among 12<sup>th</sup> grade students (31 percent) and LGB+-identifying students (47 percent).

The percentage of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students questioning sexual orientation was 36 percent, compared to 19 percent of heterosexual students in these grades. The prevalence of youth who seriously considered attempting suicide (suicidal ideation) in the past year dropped from 18.3 percent to 12.6 percent between 2021 and 2023.<sup>137</sup> This decline occurred across all regions, grades, racial/ethnic groups, and by sexual orientation, though disparities exist that mirror those described for depression. A survey of children aged six months through 5th grade in King County examined access to mental health professionals; 72.3 percent of children who needed to see a mental health professional during the previous 12 months were able to access services.<sup>138</sup>

The percentage of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in King County with an adult they can talk with also increased since 2021 to 70 percent in 2023 but is lower than the 75 percent reported by King County youth in these grades pre-pandemic.<sup>139</sup> A lower percentage of South King County students in these grades had an adult they could talk with compared to other regions (59 percent vs. 72-76 percent respectively). The percentage of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade LGB+ students with an adult to talk with was 65 percent, compared to 73 percent of heterosexual students in these grades.

Alcohol, marijuana painkiller, or any illegal drug use in past 30 days declined from pre-pandemic levels, as did tobacco use.

The percentage of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in King County reporting alcohol or drug use in the last 30 days is lower than pre-pandemic percentages overall (14 percent in 2023 vs. 24 percent in 2016).<sup>140</sup> Percentages in 2023 were lower than pre-pandemic percents by gender, sexual orientation, in each grade, and in every region except North King County. Though the percentage declined over time for most groups, disparities in use persist. Grade 12 students reported the highest use compared to students in grade 10 or 8 (23 percent compared to 11-5 percent). A higher percentage of LGB+ students (19 percent) reported use in the last month than did heterosexual youth (13 percent). Asian (7 percent),

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<sup>136</sup> 2023 Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Depression prevalence” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.” [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>137</sup> 2023 Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Attempted suicide” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.” [\[HYPERLINK "https://kingcounty.gov/legacy/depts/health/data/community-health-indicators/healthy-youth-survey.aspx?shortname=Suicide%20attempts"\]](https://kingcounty.gov/legacy/depts/health/data/community-health-indicators/healthy-youth-survey.aspx?shortname=Suicide%20attempts) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>138</sup> Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. On Select an indicator, select “Access to needed mental and behavioral health services. Measure is based on 2019 and 2021 data retrieved [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>139</sup> 2023 Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Adult Connection” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.” [\[HYPERLINK "https://kingcounty.gov/legacy/depts/health/data/community-health-indicators/healthy-youth-survey.aspx?shortname=Adult%20connection"\]](https://kingcounty.gov/legacy/depts/health/data/community-health-indicators/healthy-youth-survey.aspx?shortname=Adult%20connection) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>140</sup> 2023 Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Alcohol or drug use” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.” [\[LINK\]](#)

Black (9 percent), and Middle East North African (5 percent) students reported lower than average use in the last 30 days (14 percent). Patterns for tobacco use over time were similar; the percentage of tobacco use declined compared to pre-pandemic percentages overall and for each gender, sexual orientation, grade, and region.<sup>141</sup> The use of marijuana among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students in King County also followed this pattern of decline overall and among large subgroups by gender, sexual orientation, grade, and region.<sup>142</sup>

### Student homelessness remains an issue in King County.

The 2024 Point-In-Time Count conducted by the King County Regional Homelessness Authority counted 1,714 children under age 18 and 162 young adults ages 18-24 experiencing homelessness.<sup>143</sup> Overall, in 2024, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness (16,385) is 23 percent higher than in 2022. Young adults under the age of 25 represent roughly 16 percent of the households receiving services from the homeless response system.<sup>144</sup> Using data from school districts, roughly 3 percent of students were homeless during the 2023-24 school year, similar to the percentages in 2015-16 and 2017-18.<sup>145</sup>

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Half of Washington college students report experiencing basic needs insecurity, with over 10 percent having experienced homelessness.

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### A higher percentage of youth were shooting victims in a gun violence incident this year than in past years.

In the first half of 2024, 38 young people under 17 were shooting victims; a 54 percent increase over the previous 5-year average.<sup>146</sup> Youth and young people represented 39 percent of gun violence victims who survived and 21 percent of deaths from gun violence during the 2018-2022 period.<sup>147</sup> Most firearm deaths and hospitalizations occur in Seattle and South King County. A 2019 qualitative study engaged community members through focus groups and interviews to understand their thoughts and recommendations regarding gun safety in communities. The key recommendations included a) increased access to behavioral and mental health services, b) supporting youth and young adults in community with education, skill building and employment opportunities, and c) ensuring county systems and services are coordinated and aligned with community needs.<sup>148</sup>

## Appendix B: Major Bodies of Work

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<sup>141</sup> 2023 Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Tobacco use” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.” [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>142</sup> 2023 Healthy Youth Survey: Data Dashboard. Navigate to “More from this Data Source,” select “Marijuana use” from the dropdown on “choose another indicator.” [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>143</sup> Point in Time Count, KCRHA [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>144</sup> KCRHA Households Served [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>145</sup> This definition of homelessness includes couch surfing and other temporary living arrangements, more expansive than the point in time definition. [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>146</sup> King County gun violence data [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>147</sup> Impact of firearms in King County [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>148</sup> Report on Gun Violence Amongst Youth and Young Adults [\[LINK\]](#)

2015 Youth Action Plan Recommendation	Major Bodies of Work 2015 – 2025
<b>1. Equity and Social Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan (2016-2022)</li> <li>- Best Starts community-centered approaches, and Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Strategy<sup>149</sup></li> <li>- CYAB Equity Statement<sup>150</sup></li> <li>- Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis<sup>151</sup></li> <li>- DCHS Language Access Program</li> </ul>
<b>2. Strengthen &amp; Stabilize Families, Children, Youth &amp; Young Adults</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Best Starts Initiative 2016-2021 and 2022-2027<sup>152</sup></li> <li>- Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA)<sup>153</sup></li> <li>- Child Care as Critical Infrastructure<sup>154</sup></li> <li>- Nurse Family Partnership and New Family Services<sup>155</sup></li> <li>- Early Support for Infants and Toddlers<sup>156</sup></li> <li>- School-to-Work Program<sup>157</sup></li> <li>- School-Based Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral programs<sup>158</sup></li> <li>- School-Based Health Centers<sup>159</sup></li> <li>- Youth and Families Homelessness Prevention Initiative<sup>160</sup></li> <li>- Youth and Family Services Association<sup>161</sup></li> <li>- King County Regional Housing Authority<sup>162</sup></li> <li>- Health Through Housing<sup>163</sup></li> <li>- Forthcoming Youth Crisis Care Center<sup>164</sup></li> </ul>
<b>3. Stop the School-to-Prison Pipeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Best Starts Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline Strategy<sup>165</sup></li> <li>- Restorative Community Pathways<sup>166</sup></li> <li>- Care and Closure Strategic Planning for the Future of Secure Juvenile Detention<sup>167</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>149</sup> Best Starts Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Strategy [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>150</sup> CYAB Equity Statement [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>151</sup> Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>152</sup> Best Starts for Kids Initiative 2016-2021 and 2022-2027 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>153</sup> Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>154</sup> Child Care as Critical Infrastructure [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>155</sup> The 2016-2021 Best Starts for Kids implementation plan introduced the New Family Services (NFS) team to DCHS. The New Family Services complements the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) program operated out of Public Health Seattle-King County [\[LINK\]](#); Best Starts for Kids 2016-2021 and 2022-2027 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>156</sup> Early support for Infants and Toddlers [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>157</sup> King County School to Work Program [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>158</sup> School-Based Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral programs [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>159</sup> School-Based Health Centers [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>160</sup> Youth and Families Homelessness Prevention Initiative [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>161</sup> Youth and Family Services Associations [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>162</sup> King County Regional Housing Authority [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>163</sup> Health through Housing [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>164</sup> Forthcoming Youth Crisis Care Center [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>165</sup> Stopping the School to Prison Pipeline [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>166</sup> Restorative Community Pathways [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>167</sup> Care and Closure strategic planning for the future of secure Juvenile Detention [\[LINK\]](#)

**4. Bust Siloes/We're Better Together**

- Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention<sup>168</sup>
- DCHS CYAD re-engagement, education, and employment programs<sup>169</sup>
- Creation of DCHS Children, Youth and Young Adults Division<sup>170</sup>
- Best Starts as a DCHS and Public Health Initiative<sup>171</sup>
- Communities of Opportunity<sup>172</sup>
- Best Starts Liberation and Healing from Systemic Racism – Liberated Village collective impact approach<sup>173</sup>
- Restorative Community Pathways<sup>174</sup>
- Play Equity Coalition<sup>175</sup>
- Uniting for Youth<sup>176</sup>

**5. Get Smart about Data**

- Best Starts Indicators<sup>177</sup>
- DCHS Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit<sup>178</sup>
- Public Health Assessment, Policy Development and Evaluation Unit<sup>179</sup>
- King County Dashboards<sup>180</sup>

**6. Invest Early, Invest Often, Invest in Outcomes**

- Best Starts Investing Early Strategies (for prenatal to age five)
- Best Starts Sustain the Gain Strategies (for ages five to 24)<sup>181</sup>
- Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA)<sup>182</sup>

**7. Accountability**

- Strategic Advisor on Children and Youth<sup>183</sup>
- CYAB<sup>184</sup>
- Creating a Children, Youth, and Young Adults Division (DCHS)<sup>185</sup>
- Annual Reports<sup>186</sup>
- DCHS' Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit and dashboards<sup>187</sup>
- King County Youth Bill of Rights project

**8. Youth Bill of Rights**

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<sup>168</sup> New Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>169</sup> DCHS CYAD re-engagement, education and employment programs [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>170</sup> DCHS Children, Youth and Young Adults Division [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>171</sup> Best Starts for Kids as a DCHS and DPH Initiative [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>172</sup> Communities of Opportunity [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>173</sup> Best Starts Liberation and Healing from Systemic Racism strategy – Liberated Village [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>174</sup> Restorative Community Pathways [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>175</sup> King County Play Equity Coalition [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>176</sup> Uniting for Youth [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>177</sup> Best Starts for Kids Indicators [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>178</sup> DCHS' Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit and dashboards [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>179</sup> See Public Health data site [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>180</sup> DCHS' Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit and dashboards [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>181</sup> Best Starts for Kids 2016-2021 and 2022-2027 [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>182</sup> Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA) [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>183</sup> Following adoption of the Youth Action Plan in 2015, King County Executive appointed Sheila Ater Capestany as Strategic Advisor on Children and Youth.

<sup>184</sup> CYAB [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>185</sup> DCHS Children, Youth and Young Adults Division [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>186</sup> DCHS Dashboard catalog [\[LINK\]](#) and Best Starts for Kids Annual Reports [\[LINK\]](#)

<sup>187</sup> DCHS' Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit and dashboards [\[LINK\]](#)

**9. Evaluation &  
Reporting/Process &  
Implementation Timeline**

- DCHS' Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit and dashboards<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> DCHS' Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit and dashboards [\[LINK\]](#)

## Appendix C: Community Engagement Processes and Groups Providing Input to 2025 Youth Action Plan

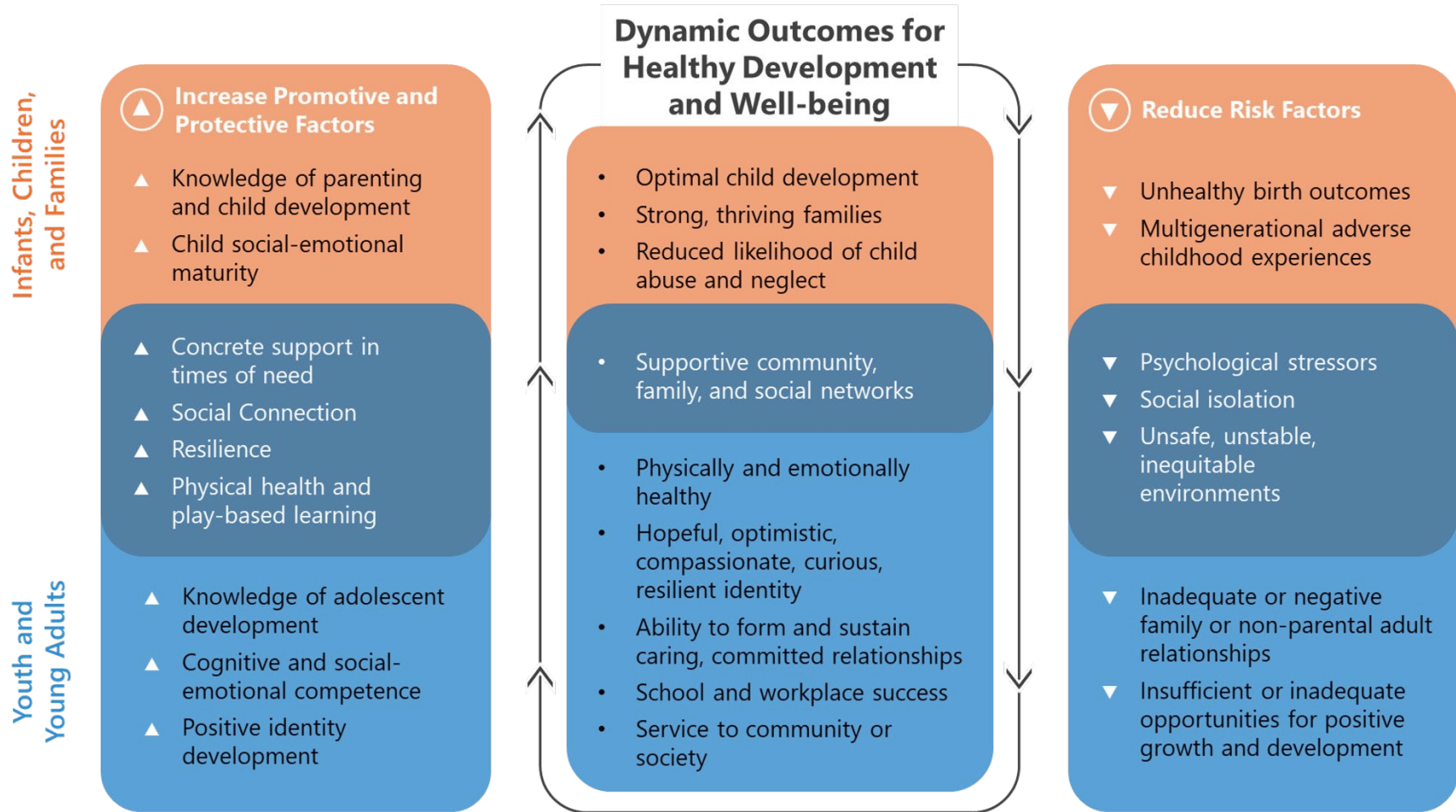
King County wishes to acknowledge and express its deep appreciation for the time and expertise of the people who are or were part of the following community engagement processes and advisory groups that influenced the content of the 2025 Youth Action Plan:

- King County's CYAB
- King County's Youth Bill of Rights (YBOR) project team
- The Community Safety and Well-being planning team and work groups
- The Care and Closure Advisory Committee
- King County Children and Families Task Force

King County also wishes to express deep appreciation to the groups that provided input into current emergent themes and developing recommendations for the Youth Action Plan update:

- City of Seattle Department leads
- The Covington Youth Council
- Greater Seattle Business of Child Care collaborative
- King County's CYAB
- King County DCHS and Public Health Program Managers and Data Scientists
- King County Library System Teen Librarians
- "Let's Connect" collaborative of system-related practitioners
- Philanthropic partners
- Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account Advisory Subcommittee
- Racial Equity Coalition, coordinated by United Way of King County
- Sound Cities Association (SCA)
- Southeast Seattle Education Coalition
- Youth Development Best Starts Grantees

Appendix D: Dynamic Outcomes for Healthy Development and Well-being



DCHS adapted the model from the Center for the Study of Social Policy Youth Thrive Framework. [\[Link\]](#)

### Appendix E: Table 3 - Notable differences between 2015 and 2025 recommendations

Table 3 provides an overview and highlights notable differences between 2015 and 2025 recommendations. The left column lists the 2025 recommendation area titles and summarizes notable differences between the 2015 and 2025 recommendations. The middle column lists the 2015 recommendations for each area, while the right column provides the 2025 recommendations for the same recommendation area. Note: The 2015 recommendations in the middle column contain brackets at the end of each recommendation indicating where they most correlate to the 2025 recommendations and sub-recommendations. For example, the 2015 recommendation 1.1 in the middle column indicates with brackets (“[2025: 1:1]”) that it is best reflected in the 1.1 recommendation of the 2025 column. Any 2015 recommendation that does not have a 2025 recommendation location reference indicated in its bracket will instead indicate the reason why (e.g., “[This recommendation was accomplished...]”). The detailed descriptions of sub-recommendations for each recommendation are provided below.

2025 Youth Action Plan Recommendation Areas	2015 Recommendations	2025 Recommendations
<b>1. Lead with Equity, Racial, and Social Justice.</b>  Notable differences: The 2025 Youth Action Plan recommendations are intended to reflect overlapping policy framework and efforts that were established after the 2015 Youth Action Plan was adopted (e.g., ‘Racism is a Public Health Crisis’, the ‘Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan’, and Best Starts for Kids Funding	1.1 Provide resources to recognize, prevent, and eliminate institutional racism and other forms of bias within every aspect of County government, including contracting processes... [2025: 1A]  1.2 Ensure young people and others with limited access to decision makers are engaged as partners in determining the services and activities meant to serve them... [2025: 1B]  1.3 Ensure services for the at-risk gang or justice involved populations are geared toward prevention, re-engaging, and reconnecting this population. [2025: 3B, 3E, 6D]  1.4 Recognize areas of need, culturally diverse communities, and pockets of poverty throughout King County outside the City of Seattle and ensure that programs and services for children, youth	1A. Identify, prevent, and eliminate institutional racism and other forms of bias within County divisions and departments providing supports to children, youth, and families, including contracting processes.  1B. Ensure young people and others with limited access to decision makers are engaged as partners in determining the services and activities meant to serve them.  1C. Ensure opportunities for youth to grow up happy, healthy, safe, and thriving are linguistically and culturally appropriate, accessible, and meet the needs of diverse communities throughout King County.  1D. Build a strategy of belonging within King County government and with partners to combat social

Access for Community Based Organizations.	and families, and young adult populations... [2025: 6D] 1.5 Ensure adequate outreach, translation and interpretation services are available for immigrant communities and English language learners. [2025: 1C] 1.6 Reduce the disproportionate number of LGBTQ youth and youth of color who experience homelessness. [2025: 2.1] 1.7 Partner with appropriate organizations to encourage voting. [2025: 1E]	isolation and ensure inclusion of young people and the adults who support them.  1E. Partner with appropriate organizations to encourage voting.
<b>2. Strengthen and Stabilize Families, Children, Youth, and Young Adults</b>  Notable differences: While the 2015 Youth Action Plan called for basic meeting needs in a variety of ways, the 2025 Youth Action Plan explicitly calls for a focus on food and life essentials, housing stability, livable wage jobs, transportation, and digital equity. Digital access and equity are basic needs that were not recognized a decade ago.	2.1 Support meeting the needs of the whole person starting before birth... [2025: 2.1] 2.2 Expand physical and behavioral health services to children and youth experiencing adverse childhood experiences (including homelessness, child abuse, and domestic violence)... [2025: 2.3, 2.5] 2.3 Ensure King County residents have stable housing; improve availability and access to shelter and housing for youth and young adults.. 2.4 Support and expand services and programs impacting school-aged children... [2025: 2.4] 2.5 Prioritize workforce development, and the development of economic opportunities, and match opportunity youth with the best education and employment opportunities. [2025: 3E] 2.6 Prioritize services for those most in need. [2025: 2.7]	2.1 Meet the basic needs of children, youth, and families. 2.2 Ensure the well-being of pregnant and parenting persons and primary caregivers. 2.3 Improve equity, access, and affordability of child care. 2.4 Improve access to expanded learning and youth development for school-aged children, youth, and young adults. 2.5 Expand behavioral health (mental health and substance use) supports and services. 2.6 Increase opportunities to engage whole families in youth programming. 2.7 Prioritize services for those most in need.

<p><b>3. Stop the School-to-Prison Pipeline</b></p> <p>Notable differences: SSPP shifted attention to specific points of intervention including strong school partnerships, gun violence prevention, and alternatives to detention. SSPP identified workforce development and paid training as specific upstream strategies that address 2015's call for promotion and prevention.</p>	<p>3.1 Support preventive practices and programs that reduce the likelihood of contact with the juvenile justice system, including... [2025: 3A, 3E]</p> <p>3.2 Convene cross-system partners (school districts, justice system, families, youth, etc.) to... [2025: 3A]</p> <p>3.3 Reduce the use of, and move toward eliminating, detention for non-violent crimes of youth under age 18 by... [2025: 3C]</p> <p>3.4 Fund and promote programs that stop the school to prison pipeline, including pro-social activities and programs for youth of all ages. [2025: 3E]</p> <p>3.5 Improve the capacity of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents to engage with their young children.</p>	<p>3A. Improve partnerships with schools and school districts to implement alternative disciplines like restorative justice practices within schools and minimize referrals and contact with the criminal legal system.</p> <p>3B. Prioritize and increase funding for gun violence prevention and community-led safety.</p> <p>3C. Explore and expand community-based alternatives to secure youth detention.</p> <p>3D. Provide distinct services to young adults ages 18-24 in the County's adult criminal legal system.</p> <p>3E. Invest in workforce development and paid training opportunities for legal system-involved and vulnerable young people.</p>
<p><b>4. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration and Collective Impact</b></p> <p>Notable differences: 2025 Youth Action Plan emphasizes more capacity building for partners and implementing a data and referral system to better connect community to provider partners and resources.</p>	<p>4.1 Internally, King County should bring together all County department and agencies serving children, youth and family, and young adult population(s). [2025: 4A]</p> <p>4.2 King County should regularly communicate internally among its departments and agencies, and externally with the broader community, on the status of the County's outcomes for children and youth. [Accomplished]</p> <p>4.3 Externally, King County should act as a multi-system convener, engaging and collaborating with existing coalitions, coordinating councils, partnerships, governments, and school districts</p>	<p>4A. Invest in strengthening existing and emerging local cross-sector collaboratives, conveners, and collective impact leaders to build capacity for regional efforts towards systems change.</p> <p>4B. Build clear mechanisms and strategies such as braided funding and aligned data to collaborate and coordinate within and across King County departments, and with local cities and Washington State departments serving children, youth, and families.</p>

that represent the full spectrum of the prenatal to 24-year-old services and interests to...[2025: 4A]

4C. Engage with philanthropy and other private sector partners to ensure the wealth of our region supports eliminating inequities and promotes thriving communities for children, youth, and families.

4D. Support an integrated referral system and resource database across the network of community service providers to have one place where young people, and those that support them, can learn about, and get connected to programming.

## 5. Be Data Informed and Data Inclusive

Notable differences: 2025 Youth Action Plan is more explicit about centering youth, family, and community voices. Also emphasized dedication of resources to continue building internal County government and community capacity for improved data practices.

5.1 Bring together all County department and agencies serving children, youth and family, and young adult population(s) to jointly and collectively...[2025: 4A, 5D]

5.2 Identify examples of cross-agency data systems and government-community data sharing within the County, support the documentation and, if appropriate, replication of these systems across the County. [2025: 5B, 5D]

5.3 Establish data-use expectations. In order to effectively use data for decision making and strategic direction, assess progress and target interventions, any data collection effort should ensure that it has the capacity...[2025: 5B, 5C,

5.4 Invest in data development; develop the capacity to... know who is accessing King County services, who is not, and what outcomes result from the investments. [2025: 4D, 5C]

5.5 Examine and evaluate data collection approaches to determine which data collection efforts are not useful and could be eliminated. [2025: 5B]

5A. Center and reflect communities in data, including youth and family voice, prioritizing community-based partnerships, and relationships with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and organizations.

5B. Dedicate the resources needed to continue building capacity within the County and in communities and organizations to collect, use, and improve data practices.

5C. Build and sustain a culture of learning and accountability by promoting co-designed continuous improvement practices that mitigate harm and bias in interpretation and reporting.

5D. Improve cross-system data coordination and learning within King County and with municipal and other partners.

	<p>5.6 Commit to enhancing and supporting promising organizations and networks in building their data and continuous improvement capacity so that those organizations and networks are better able to serve communities. [2025: 5B, 5C]</p> <p>5.7 Create the capacity to map, coordinate and align programs and services across the agencies, governments, school districts and other silos that intersect with youth and families. [2025: 5D]</p> <p>5.8 Create and support data sharing infrastructures that measure cross-County health and well-being outcomes and provide for disaggregation of data from prenatal to age 24...[2025: 5D]</p> <p>5.9 Create a culture of data internal and external to King County government through...[2025: 5D]</p> <p>5.10 Institutionalize the use of youth-developed youth surveys... [2025: 5A]</p> <p>5.11 Build on and increase support for the continuous improvement of programs and services of King County government by...[2025: 5B, 5D]</p> <p>5.12 Maintain an ongoing data development agenda.</p> <p>5.13 Publicly post a dashboard tracking indicators. [Accomplished]</p>	
<p><b>6. Invest Early, Invest Often, Invest in Community-Informed Outcomes</b></p> <p>Notable differences: There are no significant differences between the</p>	<p>6.1 Fund prevention activities supporting positive child and youth development, prevention and early intervention, and encourage/incentivize the development of grassroots youth- and community-based solutions. [2025: 6A, 6B]</p>	<p>6A. Continue to invest in promotion, prevention, and early intervention activities supporting child and youth development from prenatal age to 24.</p> <p>6B. Continue to invest in local youth- and community-based solutions that are culturally relevant and reflective of the communities' identified needs.</p>

2015 and 2025 recommendations. The 2025 recommendations are more consolidated compared to the 2015 recommendations.

- 6.2 Fund services and programs for children, youth and families, and young adults that are based on best and promising practices. [2025: 6A, 6B]
- 6.3 Support the transition to funding outcomes rather than funding service provided, following the national shift in funding models, and...[2025: 6C]
- 6.4 Work across County agencies and departments and with external partners such as local jurisdictions and service providers to identify communities in need and invest adequately to reach outcomes. [2025: 6D]
- 6.5 Invest in continuous improvement, with County goals, outcomes, and indicators aligned across departments and agencies, and use as the basis for determining the effectiveness of existing County efforts. [2025: 5]
- 6.6 Support new resources for early childhood development appropriate to the County's role. [2025: 2.1, 2.3, 2.4]
- 6.7 Support new resources to connect services for children and youth in and around schools. [2025: 2.4, 2.5]
- 6.8 Support new resources to encourage youth engagement and leadership in policy-decision making. [2025: 1B]
- 6.9 Support new resources to promote cultural competence and eliminate institutional racism across departments and agencies. [2025: 1C, 1E]

6C. Invest in outcomes that are linked to community learning and informed by research.

6D. Work across County agencies and departments and with external partners such as local jurisdictions and service providers to identify gaps in funding by geography and issue area, and work to resource underinvested areas.

**7. Implementation, Accountability, and Evaluation (combined 7 and 9 for clarity)**

**Recommendation Area 7– Accountability**

- 7.1 Create Shared Accountability...[2025: 7A]
- 7.2 Identify Outcomes and Collect Data...[2025: 5]
- 7.3 Align with External Efforts and Groups...[3A, 4A]

7A. Ensure the CYAB and the County maintain shared accountability for the implementation of the Youth Action Plan recommendations, including reviews every five years.

Notable differences: The 2025 Youth Action Plan reflects the establishment of the CYAB, calls on the County to establish a Youth Commission, and review progress on implementation of the Youth Action Plan every five years.

- 7.4 Establish a Position to do the Work...[2025: 7C]
- 7.5 Create an Advisory Body to the Executive and Council...[2025: 7A, 7B]

**Recommendation Area 9 - Evaluation and Reporting/Process and Implementation Timeline**

- 7.6 Implement the Task Force’s recommendations around accountability, including establishing a position within the Executive branch to coordinate the complex work called for in the report. [Completed]
- 7.7 Look to and replicate when appropriate successful evaluation, reporting, implementation, and oversight structures that are currently in use, such as for MIDD and the Veterans and Human Services Levy, Eastside Pathways, and the Road Map project. [Accomplished]
- 7.8 Require effective, ongoing community engagement occur during the development and execution of the evaluation, reporting, implementation, and oversight structures. Engagement must be transparent, accessible, and occur with frequency. [2025: 1A, 1B, 5A]
- 7.9 Prioritize developing a unified, comprehensive and coordinated approach to data based on mutually agreed upon outcomes. [2025: 5]
- 7.10 King County must evaluate and revise its contracting processes to enable smaller, geographically, ethnically, and culturally specific organizations to successfully compete for the ability to provide services and programs against

7B. Set forth plans to create a King County Youth Commission.

7C. Ensure the Children Youth and Young Adult Division Director, and their designee(s), continues to liaise between the CYAB, the King County Executive and King County Council on the implementation of the Youth Action Plan recommendations and County investments and initiatives related to children, youth, and families.

7D. In the event there are significant changes in the County’s capacity to invest in children, youth, and families through levies or other funding streams, the Youth Action Plan will be reviewed for policy alignment and prioritization.

	larger, established, and well-funded entities. [2025: 9]	
<b>8. Youth Bill of Rights</b>  Notable differences: The KC Youth Bill of Rights was developed and adopted by the KC Council.	8.1 Look to authentic youth engagement program models that already exist in the County, such as Mockingbird Society and the King County Youth Advisory Council, for best practices in outreach and engagement to reach young people, including the hardest to reach youth. [2025: 1] 8.2 Support new resources to encourage youth engagement and leadership in policy-decision making. [2025: 6] 8.3 Ensure that youth participate in the recommended advisory body to the Executive and Council on children and families and youth and young adults. [2025: 7]	8A. Utilize the King County Youth Bill of Rights as a formal guide when considering policies and budgetary decisions that impact children and youth.  8B. Update the Youth Bill of Rights every five years.
<b>9. New: Strengthen the Community Based Organization Ecosystem</b>	Not Applicable	9A. Increase the ease of access for community-based organizations to apply for and receive funding across all King County Departments.  9B. Recognize the full cost of providing services in contracts, including wages and benefits, and annual increases keeping up with inflation.  9C. Fund multi-year and general operating support grants and contracts wherever possible.  9D. Provide low barrier capacity building support across all King County departments funding community-based organizations and nonprofits.

9E. Support the ecosystem of children and youth serving organizations through resource coordination and entities like intermediaries and coalitions that have expertise and community trust.

9F. Partner with, and learn from, local and national philanthropic partners and other public funders to ensure sector strength and sustainability.